

Ayodhya and After

Issues Before Hindu Society

Koenraad Elst

Introduction

I am not a Hindu. And I am certainly not a Muslim. So, when I started writing my earlier book *Ram Janmabhoomi vs Babri Masjid, a Case Study in Hindu-Muslim Conflict*, in the spring of 1990, I was an outsider to this conflict between Hindus and Muslims. But as I ventured deeper into the unique configuration of forces now existing in India, I saw that this was not a conflict between just any two communities. It is not just a struggle between one self-interest and another self-interest. It is a struggle between very unequal contenders, with unequal motives for waging this struggle at all.

On the one hand, there is the society that has continued the age-old civilization of this country. It has been badly bruised by centuries of foreign rule and oppression, with the moral losses more serious than the territorial and cultural ones : it suffers of self- forgetfulness and lack of self-respect. But it is still far better off than most of the cultures that have been overrun by the Muslim conquerors or the European colonizers. It has a real chance of coming through.

On the other hand, there is a community, which is allowed to function within this larger society, but which has the roots of its separate identity outside this society's age-old civilization. These people's ancestors were in may cases pulled out of Hindu society and made members of the Muslim community under duress. Now, they would automatically evolve back into Hindu society, were it not for some politicians and theologians who instill a separate communal identity in them.

The Ayodhya movement, which wants to reintegrate the sacred place of Ram Janmabhoomi into the living Hindu tradition by building a Mandir on it, is at the same time an invitation to the Muslim Indians to reintegrate themselves into the society and the culture from which their ancestors were cut off by fanatical rulers and their thought police, the theologians. It is thus an exercise in national integration.

The struggle of Hindu society is not primarily with the Muslim community. The most important opponents of Hindu society today are not the Islamic communal leaders, but the interiorized colonial rulers of India, the alternated English-educated and mostly Left-leaning elite that noisily advertises its *secularism*. It is these people who impose anti-Hindu policies on Hindu society, and who keep Hinduism down and prevent it from proudly raising its head after a thousand years of oppression. The worst torment for Hindu society today is not the arrogant and often violent agitation from certain minority groups, nor the handful of privileges which the non-Hindu communities are getting. The worst problem is this mental slavery, this sense of inferiority which Leftist intellectuals, through their power positions in education and the media, and their direct influence on the public and political arena, keep on inflicting on the Hindu mind.

These Leftist intellectuals work in a strange collusion with the Islamic fanatics. Normally, the atheist Left should be the sharpest opponent of religious obscurantism and dogmatic adherence to anti-universalist belief systems like Islam. But in India, the two work happily together for the destruction of their common enemy: Hindu Dharma. Of course, the Leftists are mistaken if they think they can use the Muslims for their own ends. It is a one-way collaboration, and increasingly so, as the Left is put on the defensive while Islam is still on the offensive. So far, the Left has rendered some fine intellectual services to the cause of Islam. It has strongly supported the movement for the Partition of India on the basis of the Islamic Two-Nation Theory. After Partition, it has used its increasing hold on the entire intellectual and educational scene in India to paralyze all criticism of the historical record and ideological character of Islam.

Then again, the impression that this westernized elite is merely being used for Islamic communal designs, may be superficial. This elite itself is quite confident that it is in no way threatened by Islamic self-assertion. And rightfully so : Islam cannot seriously challenge modernity once it has really taken off and shaped the polity (as it has in India, far more than in the Shah's Iran). While Islamic resurgence may pose a physical threat to Hindu society, the deeper challenge and the sharpest disdain are coming from the Left-leaning westernized (short : Nehruvian) establishment.

So, one of the first tasks in the awakening of Hindu society is to scrutinize and expose the Nehruvian establishment, its political and, more fundamentally, its intellectual dimensions. Today, that is becoming easy. When in the fifties people like Ram Swarup and Sita Ram Goel were waging an intellectual struggle against Communism, they were up against a dense fog of widespread fascination with this intrusive ideology. But in the nineties the sky is clearing up, and we witness the swan song of the once so arrogant Leftist intellectuals even in their last strongholds. It is a foregone conclusion that their empire is nearing its end, it is just a matter of not letting their exit drag on for longer than necessary, and being prepared to fill the vacuum.

At the intellectual level, Hindus will soon be able to breathe freely. They will be able to rediscover and reformulate the numerous valuable expressions of the one Sanatana Dharma. They will be able to affirm the unity and integrity of this Sanatana Dharma, without being falsely accused of *assimilative communalism* when they restate the scientific fact that Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism are full members of the one Hindu commonwealth of schools and sects. They will be able to reaffirm the unity and integrity of Hindu society, and to debunk the casteist and regionalist separatisms that have been fostered by its enemies and equipped with a pseudo- historical basis. They will be able to put the *evils of Hindu society* into the correct historical perspective on the basis of the real facts, and judge them by universal standards rather than by the hostile ad hoc standards that have been applied to Hindu society by its enemies.

Equipped with a renewed self-awareness, Hindus will be able to face the challenge posed by the increasingly militant Muslim world. So far, with the help of the leftists, Islam has been able to impose a kind of Emergency on India. During Indira Gandhi's Emergency rule, everyone was perfectly free to sing the praise of Nehru's daughter, but criticizing her was a dangerous thing to do. All the Indian intellectuals refer with indignation to this episode (during which the Constitution was amended to make India a *secular socialist republic*). Similarly, it is allowed to eulogize Islam as a religion of peace and brotherhood, but scrutinizing Islamic history and doctrine, or merely asking some critical questions, is quite out of bounds. Books that do these things, have a good chance of getting banned, with the tacit or explicit

approval of the secularists, and newspaper editors have interiorized this bank on critical writings about Islam. At the intellectual level it is very easy to put Islam on the defensive and cool down its arrogance, just by doing those very things which this Emergency wants to prevent. If Hindus take cognizance of the real texts of Islam, the real doctrines they embody, the real story of the Prophet's mission and career, and the real story of the application of these doctrines in the Islamic conquest of India, then they will soon shed their habit of eulogizing this imperialist ideology. If moreover they apply the precise psychological categories, which Hindu tradition has developed, to understand the quality of consciousness that has generated the central texts and doctrines of Islam, they will soon be cured of their mental subservience to Islam.

It is my conviction that Islam will not last very much longer. In the confrontation with the rational spirit, which was present in Hindu, thought since millennia, but which has been brought centre-stage in modern culture and education by the West, the dogmas of Islam cannot survive. The universalist attitude of science revolts against the belief that one man could get a special message from none less than the Creator of the Universe, while others are excluded from any such direct contact. The critical attitude of science rejects the demand that we accept Mohammed's claim to prophethood without verification. Islam has no satisfying reply to this challenge of science and rationality.

Moreover, the present upsurge in Islamic activism, no matter how threatening it may look, will not be able to deliver the goods. It may mobilize popular aggression against the non-Muslims of the world, but when it comes to running a country, it will not fare better than Communism. Of course, it has more roots in the soul of the people. But it is faced with material needs and popular attitudes and expectations that modernity has spread to all the countries of the world. Even Islamic rulers, even in a dictatorship, somehow have to please their people. To do this, they need the material products of modernity, if only because in the overpopulated countries of today, a modern infrastructure is indispensable to feed the people (we needn't even mention the fondness of Islamic as much as Kafir rulers for modern weaponry). So, they cannot avoid bringing in modern technology, therefore modern science, therefore modern

thinking. While *modern* thinking is certainly not the final word in the progress of humanity, it is quite sufficient to undermine the exclusivist beliefs central to Islam.

With that, we have only demonstrated the weakness of Islam. It cannot possibly win against the culture of rationality and humanism. However, it can hold out for some time and still gain a lot in numbers and power. How far it will crumble, depends partly on the emergence of people, especially born Muslims, who go in and actively criticize Islam in forums with Muslims audiences. It also depends on the frankness and serenity with which non-Muslims who are in regular contact with Muslims, such as the Hindus, express their skepsis regarding the central claims of Islam, and the logic and humanity with which they present alternative views. Confronting Islam with rational criticism will constitute a turning-point, very delicate but inevitable. But it is the positive attraction of superior (i.e. more rational and humanist) thought and culture that will be the single most important factor in the inescapable decline of Islam.

The Hindu reply to Islam should consist mostly in a positive attitude of understanding, rooted in Hindu humanism and springing from the knowledge of the soul which Hindu tradition has been cultivating since ages. It should, for instance, make a careful distinction between the two cultural components of the present Islamic upsurge : one is the self-assertion against the imposition of the spiritually impoverished (*secularized*), reductionist culture of the West, which is a stand Hindus may share; the other is the fanatical imposition of the Islamic belief system. The Hindu should understand the mental and the social processes that tie people to such irrational belief systems, and maintain in his attitude and judgment a scrupulous distinction between the human beings that have been caught in this belief system, and the Islamic belief system itself. This will be easier, more credible and less hostile, if he takes an equally sobre look at the state of his own culture, dropping both the self- depreciation and the compensatory self-glorification so prevalent in contemporary Hindu rhetoric.

This critique of Islam, it should be clearly understood, is a critique of a belief system and its concomitant code of behaviour, and not an attack on a

community of people. It is also not a goal in itself. at the political level, it is merely a practical diagnosis of an acute problem: the cause of the persistent communal tension in India is Islam. After all, any two communities, religious or other, can pick a quarrel, but it remains occasional; while the tension between Muslims and all other religious is chronic and systematic. At the intellectual level, the critique of Islam is merely an exercise or case study in the pathology of religion, as part of a general exploration and mapping of man's religious history, which in turn is part of the groundwork for the integral human education in the global civilization of tomorrow. I for one have no intention of spending my life crusading against Islam or any other. It is just that we have to free ourselves from illusions about certain intrusive and pretentious belief systems, and once that is done, we can concentrate on more positive dimensions of social and spiritual life.

The same thing counts for the critique of the contentions put forward by the secularists. It is thoughts, not people, that are the problem. However, people who have been practising slander with so much gusto and self-righteousness, will only understand if the proper name- tags are attached to the criticism of their thought. I have dealt with them at rather great length in this volume, and I have not spared them. They pretend to be the champions of modernity, rationality and democracy, and that makes their distortions and their anti- democratic and even totalitarian stand on important issues all the more unacceptable. They have to be exposed, and I have made my contribution to the discharge of this fairly unpleasant job. I wish and intend it to be the last time that I have to go after them. Once Hindu society has shaken off these Hindu-baiting leeches, i.e. when it is no longer under their mental spell, it can concentrate on developing and actualizing the treasures it has to offer to mankind, and achieving genuine national integration.

Actually, this *national integration* that every talking body in India talks about, is a very natural condition and needs no *achieving*. Rather, it requires dropping a few things. It requires dropping the anti-Hindu separatist doctrines that have largely been created for the purposes of several imperialisms, and are now being kept afloat with a lot of distortive intellectual and propagandistic effort. Just drop this effort, and this country will naturally find back its unity. Delhi, 5th February, 1991.

Chapter 1. Summary of the Historical Question

1.1 Before the Masjid, the Mandir

The historical starting point of the Ram Janmabhoomi issue is the contention that the Babri Masjid structure in Ayodhya was built after the forcible demolition of a Hindu temple on the same spot by Muslim soldiers. In the first part of my book *Ram Janmabhoomi vs. Babri Masjid, a Case Study in Hindu-Muslim conflict*,¹ I have dealt extensively with the arguments given pro and contra this contention. The case can be summarized as follows.

There is archaeological evidence that a temple, or at the very least a building with pillars, has stood on the Babri Masjid spot since the eleventh century. Of course, because of the structure standing there, the archaeological search has been far from exhaustive, but at least of the existence of this 11th century building we can be certain.²

When the building was destroyed, we do not know precisely, there are no descriptions of the event extant anywhere. Mohammed Ghori's armies arrived there in 1194, and they may have destroyed it. It may have been rebuilt afterwards, or it may only have been destroyed by later Muslim rulers of the area. so it is possible that when Mir Baqi, Babar's lieutenant, arrived there in 1528, he found a heap of rubble, or an already aging mosque, rather than a magnificent Hindu temple.

However, it is very unlikely that the place was not functioning as a Hindu place of worship just before the Babri Masjid was built. As is well known, fourteen pillar-stones with Hindu temple ornamentation have been used in the construction of the Babri Masjid. Considering the quantity of bricks employed in the building, one cannot say that these fourteen pillar-stones were used merely to economize on bricks: quantitatively, they simply didn't

make a difference. These remnants of Hindu architecture were more probably use in order to display the victory of the mosque over the temple, of Islam over Paganism. That was in keeping with a very common practice of Muslim conquerors, who often left pieces of the outer wall of the destroyed temple standing (as was done in the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi, replacing the Kashi Vishvanath temple), or worked pieces of idols into the threshold of the newly- built mosque, so that the faithful could tread them underfoot.

Since the actual practice in the case of the Babri Masjid conforms to this general pattern, we may infer that in all probability the Masjid was built in the same material circumstances in which the pattern normally applied, viz. just after the demolition of a Pagan place of worship. This is all the more probable considering that no alternative explanations for the presence of these Hindu pillar-stones have been offered, not even by those historians who would have an ideological and argumentative interest in doing so.

In methodological terms, our conclusion that the use of Hindu remnants in the mosque building indicates an immediately preceding temple demolition because such a sequence fulfills a common pattern, is based on the principle of coherence. This principle as a ground for historical inference does not given absolute certainty, but at least a good measure of probability. But conversely, a contention that violates the principle of coherence without being supported by hard evidence, thereby becomes very improbable. As we shall see, the advocates of the Babri Masjid cause, including a team of 25 JNU historians, have disregarded the coherence principle in central points of their argumentation.

In their well-known and oft-quoted statement on the Ayodhya controversy, the JNU historians have rejected the contention that there was a temple on the disputed spot before the Babri Masjid was built there.³ This is a wildly improbable contention. There is a general cultural pattern that would have made people build a temple there, a very important one.

If you go to Ayodhya and walk to the Masjid/Janmabhoomi, you will find yourself walking uphill, even after passing the Hanuman Garhi which itself is on a little hill. Relative to the flatness of the entire Ganga basin, the disputed split is quite an elevated place, and it overlooks Ayodhya. Now,

either prince Rama was a historical character, born in the castle of the local ruler, which would logically (i.e. strategically) have been built on this elevation, and then his birthplace temple would also have to be there. Or we do not assume Ram's historicity (without necessarily excluding it) and we also do not assume that he was born there, which is the JNU historians' position, and then the question is reduced to whether people would have refrained from building a temple on this hilltop.

Ayodhya is a place of pilgrimage and temple city of long standing. The JNU historians themselves cite evidence that it housed important temples of the Buddhists, Shaivas and Jains. In such a temple city par excellence, it is virtually impossible that the geographical place of honour would have been left unused. The contention that there was no temple on the Babri Masjid site goes against all we know of ritual patterns in the lay-out of sacred places the world over: it violates the principle of coherence.

That the Babri Masjid replaced a pre-existent centre of worship, is also indicated by the fact that Hindus kept returning to the place, where more indulgent Muslim rulers allowed them to worship on a platform just outside the mosque. This is attested by a number of different pieces of testimony by Western travelers and by local Muslims, all of the pre-British period, as well as from shortly after the 1856 British take-over but explicitly referring to older local Muslim sources. A number of these documents have been presented by Harsh Narain⁴ and A.K. Chatterjee⁵. That they are authentic and have a real proof value, is indirectly corroborated by the attempts made to make two of them disappear, which Harsh Narain and Arun Shourie independently discovered⁶.

Most of these sources explicitly declare that the Babri Masjid had replaced an earlier Hindu temple, and even specify that it has been Ram's birthplace temple. But whatever their historical explanation for this unusual phenomenon of Hindus insisting on worshipping in a mosque's courtyard, they testify to the existing practice. And these Hindus were going into a mosque courtyard for specifically Hindu worship -- not for common Hindu-Muslim worship of some local Sufi, as you find in some places, but for separate Hindu worship of Lord Ram. The JNU historians completely fail to explain this well attested fact.

The attachment of the Hindus to the Babri Masjid spot cannot reasonably have originated in the period when the mosque was standing there. For the sake of argument, we might opine that perhaps a great miracle happened on the spot, sometime later than 1528: but in that case, there would be a tradition saying so. No, the Hindus' attachment to the spot clearly dates back to pre-Masjid days, and stems from a pre-existent tradition of worship on that very spot. Since this near inevitable assumption is corroborated by all relevant documents and by the local Hindu tradition, and is not contradicted by any authentic source giving a different explanation, we might as well accept it.

However, while the inference that there was a pre-existent tradition of worship on the spot is necessary for explaining the Hindus' centuries-long attachment to the place, it may not be sufficient. There are many destroyed temples to which Hindus have not kept returning. They simply built a new temple somewhere else, and even when Muslim power ended, they stayed with the new arrangement and forgot about the destroyed and abandoned temple. If they were so attached to the place, it is probably not because the erstwhile temple had made it important, but because the place had an importance of its own, and retained its special character even regardless of there being a temple in place or not. This assumption is coherent with the unanimous and uncontradicted testimony of Hindu and pre-colonial Muslim and Western sources, that the place was believed to be Ram's birthplace.

When in December 1990 the Chandra Shekhar government asked both parties to collect evidence for their case, a small group of scholars, on being invited by the VHP, traced some more strong pieces of documentary evidence. At the same time, dr. S.P. Gupta and Prof. B.B. Lal came out with unambiguous archaeological and iconographical proof that a Vaishnava temple has stood at the site until it was replaced with the Babri Masjid. By contrast, the Babri Masjid Action Committee could only muster a pile of newspaper clippings, articles and book extracts by partisan writers who gave their anti-Mandir opinion, but no evidence whatsoever. The Hindu team of scholars had no difficulty in demonstrating, in a rejoinder, the utter lack of proof value of the AIBMAC *evidence*. The VHP documents Evidence for the Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir and Rejoinder to the AIBMAC Documents are the definitive scholarly statement on the Ayodhya dispute.

There is one architectural argument which has not been used in the VHP evidence bundle, though it seems quite pertinent to me. The central dome of the Masjid is slightly deformed, and it is supported by a front wall that forms a sort of screen before part of the dome. The reason seems to be that the builders had to adjust the upper part of the Masjid to the walls and pillars of the pre-existing Mandir, which they were incorporating rather than razing them flat and starting totally anew.

1.2 Methodological Errors

In order to save their contention that the Babri Masjid was not built on a Hindu place of worship (let alone a specially sacred place), several Babarwadis have resorted to questioning the validity of the documents attesting the Hindu worship in the Masjid courtyard during the period of Muslim rule. Their claim is that all those authors, as well as the Hindu worshippers who they described, were mistaken : they had unknowingly swallowed a false rumor which from about 1800 onwards the British had consciously floated in order to create Hindu-Muslim riots, which they hoped would help them in eventually annexing Awadh, the state of which Ayodhya was a part. This hypothesis is quite an amazing construction.

First of all, four of the sources are pre-1800. The Western travelers William Finch and father Tieffenthaler visited Ayodhya in 1608 and 1767 respectively. A document by a Faizabad Qazi proving that Hindus used the mosque courtyard for worship and wanted to take over the Masjid itself, and a letter by Aurangzeb's granddaughter encouraging the Muslims to assert their hold over ex- Hindu shrines at Varanasi, Mathura and Ayodhya, were written in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Secondly, the Babarwadis want us to believe that the local Hindus decided to set up a puja tradition in a mosque courtyard and thereby constantly risk a lot of trouble with the Muslim population and rulers, just because some foreign paleface came to tell them that in their elaborate Ram tradition one little piece of information was missing, which he then promptly furnished : Ram had been born right there on that mosque spot. This is not at all coherent with all that we know about religious traditions in

general and brahminical pilgrimage traditions in particular : it arbitrarily assumed an extreme gullibility, an astonishing lack of *serieux* concerning the native sacred tradition among the very guardians of that tradition, and an uncharacteristic openness to utterly non-expert foreign opinion (even today they will have nothing of the chronology imposed on Indian history by scholars).

Thirdly, that the British concocted a story of temple demolition and replacement by a mosque, because that would create riots, presupposes that they had to break a state of communal harmony, which existed in spite of the fact that the country was full of demolished temple demolitions failed to create trouble, why concoct one? Or why not start with exploiting to the full the trouble- making potential of the non-concocted temple demolitions? The postulated rumour is not known to be part of a British tactic attested anywhere.

But all right, sometimes very improbable and uncharacteristic scenarios turn out to be true,. So even while the hypothesis of the British concoction of a Ram temple destroyed by Babar is grossly incoherent with our general knowledge relevant to the issue, I would be willing to consider it if they manage to come up with a single positive indication : a letter by a British officer mentioning the creation of this rumour, for instance. But the 25 eminent JNU historians, quoted by every secularist in India, and other academics like Gyanendra Pandey or R.S. Sharma, have not come up with a single piece of evidence. In the numerous and voluminous archives of the British Raj that are still extant, they have not found anything. They have not even come up with any similar British ruse in any other part of India. Therefore, the hypothesis that the destruction of a Hindu temple and its replacement by the Babri Masjid is merely a rumour created by the British as part of their "*divide and rule*" policy, has to be rejected as both extremely improbable and totally unsupported by evidence.

The British concoction hypothesis is not only untenable. It is so far off the mark, so totally out of tune with the known historical and cultural context, so totally unsuggested by any relevant document, that no unbiased historian would ever have come up with it. It warrants a suspicion against

the pretended objectivity and scientific temper of the secularist participants in this debate.

In methodological terms, we could say that the pro-Babri case, including the JNU professors' statement, violates the principle that "*entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity*", also known as "*Occam's razor*". Against every element in the very coherent hypothesis of the pre-existent Ram Mandir, they have to invent a counter-hypothesis, altogether a long string of separate ad hoc hypotheses, of which it remains to be proven that they add up to a coherent scenario. What is more, while the Ram Mandir hypothesis is coherent with well-established behavior patterns (of general city building, of Hindu devotion, of Muslim conquest, of British colonial policy), and postulates little more than that the general pattern applied in Ayodhya as well, the JNU historians continually have to postulate uncharacteristic courses of events.

Thus, in postulating that the Babri Masjid was built on empty land, they implicitly postulate that the Ayodhya people for some reason made an exception to the custom of building something important on the place which by its elevation was the place of honour in their city. This special entity which the JNU historians implicitly create within their theory, and of which they should accept the burden of tracing the existence in reality.

For another example, in postulating that the Hindus did not have a pre-1528 tradition of worship on the Janmabhoomi spot, they are forced to create within their scenario a reason why the Hindus suddenly engaged in the strange behavior of defying the Muslim rulers by starting a strictly Hindu worship right in a mosque's courtyard. They implicitly postulate a highly unusual event that made the Hindus behave so uncharacteristically. This event is another entity they create, and of which they should show the historicity.

When you analyze and explicate all the implications of the secularist historians' version of the Babri Masjid story, you find that they in fact postulate a great many unusual entities. And they create them purely in the air : not a trace of evidence of a reason for leaving the place of honour in Ayodhya unused, no evidence for an event that made the Hindus start worship in the till then unimportant mosque courtyard, no evidence for a

British rumour campaign. If the (explicitly or implicitly) postulated scenario elements were found to correspond to a real historical entity or event, then they would not be a multiplication of entities beyond necessity. But so far, the anti-Mandir scenario is dependent on a multiplicity of entities postulated ad hoc, beyond necessity. Beyond necessity, because there is a coherent alternative scenario that integrates all the available information : the Ram Mandir hypothesis.

The argumentation developed by anti-Mandir polemicists like Syed Shahabuddin, Mrs. Surinder Kaur [7](#), and the JNU historians, is simply unbecoming of educated people. This postulating of very improbable theoretical possibilities without any coherence is not really the scholarly defense of an alternative Ayodhya scenario, it is just a diversionary tactic made up to put the pro- Mandir people on the defensive. As the historian Sita Ram Goel has said, it is a typical strategy of unscrupled lawyers. For instance, in the Indira Gandhi murder trial, the facts were amply clear, and all that an honest defense lawyer could do, was to plead circumstances in order to avert the death penalty. But no, they constructed a fantastic scenario, bringing in a conspiracy involving Indira's son Rajiv, totally unfounded, but enough to jeopardize the prosecution case for a little while, by forcing it to prove what it had considered evident and already sufficiently proven. Of course, lawyers are paid by clients to try such untruthful tactics, so we may perhaps forgive them. In the case of historians, or even for politicians claiming high ideals, this is unacceptable.

Incidentally, the same methodological mistake is made, though less blatantly, in the discussion of Ayodhya's ancient history. The contention that the Ramayana is just fictional, postulates a non-typical cultural phenomenon which needs an explanation, a reason (i.e. a theoretical entity). After all, what great epic in any ancient culture is known to have been purely fiction? Western scholars long thought that Homer's epic on the Trojan war was pure fiction, until Heinrich Schliemann started digging and found Troy. So long as no independent indications for the Ramayana's purely fictional character are given, it is more logical to assume that, like most ancient epics, it has a historical core with a lot of fabulation around it.

But the ancient history is not what concerns us here. It is far more difficult to get at conclusive evidence regarding Ram's existence, era, abode etc., but fortunately it is not important for the political issue which historians are called upon to help solve. Once it is established that there was a Ram temple on the spot, and that there is a genuine tradition that considers it Ram's birthplace, then the am Janmabhoomi should get equal respect with other sacred places, like the Kaaba, of whom nobody asks whether Mohammed's claim that it was built by Abraham, is at all historical. The question is only whether it is indeed a Hindu sacred place, not why it is one.

1.3 Who built Babar's mosque?

An entirely different aspect of the Babri Masjid's history is whether it really was built by Babar (or his lieutenant Mir Baqi) at all. The JNU historians have chosen to cast some doubt on this assumption, which so far had seemed evident because it is confirmed by the Persian inscriptions on the building, itself. Another secularist, Sushil Shrivastava, has made much of the matter, and opines that the inscriptions are a later forgery (on the ground that the calligraphic style is anachronistic), and that the structure was built under Khwaja-i-Jahan in the fourteenth century⁸. His justification for this dating is the architecture of the building, especially its imperfect domes, which in his opinion must have been built before the dome architecture was perfected under the Delhi-based Turkish sultans in the fifteenth century.

Of course, this architectural anachronism, if at all substantiated, can easily be explained in other ways, starting with the general fact that architectural innovations spread only gradually. Moreover, Mr. Shrivastava's somewhat unexpected theory leaves its proponent with the task of explaining how and why the mosque came to be associated with Babar. On the other hand, it would take the last bit of force out of the (already discredited) argument that Babar cannot have demolished a temple on that spot as sources of the Moghul period do not mention the temple demolition : the *"Babri Masjid would have been a long-accomplished fact by the Moghul period, but it could just as much have replaced a Hindu temple under an earlier ruler"*.

In fact, the two contentions that the Mosque was built before Babar, and that it was built on a forcibly demolished temple, have been combined by R. Nath. when he read in the Indian Express that pages of his own book History of Mughal Architecture had been included in the pro-Babri and anti-Mandir evidence of the BMAC, presented to the government of India on December 23, 1990, he sent in a reply, in which he stated that he was completely sure that the Masjid had been built on a temple, and that inspection on the spot had confirmed him in this conviction. On the other hand, he argued that the mosque cannot have been built by Babar or Mir Baqi, because in their brief stay in this area they had to wage a difficult struggle against the Pathans, and had no time for building mosques. Rather, the earlier Muslim rulers of the area could have demolished the temple and replaced it with the mosque. Mir Baqi at most renovated it, and does not claim more than that this happened *under Babar's reign* (rather than *at Babar's command*, though this translation is disputed).

But theories about the exact date of the Babri Masjid construction are not really to the point, except in so far as they can or cannot be coordinated with other data. At any rate, the Muslim habit of destroying Hindu temples and replacing them with mosques, often using some of the temple materials as a display of victory over Paganism, has remained unchanged during the entire Turko- Afghan and Moghul period. Whether the temple was destroyed by Mohammed Ghorī in 1194, or by Babar, or by a ruler in between these two, or even by more than one of them (since Hindus were tireless rebuilders if given a chance), this all makes no difference to the facts pertinent for the Hindu case: one, there was a temple there since at least the eleventh century, attested by archaeology : two, the use of temple materials in the Babri Masjid entirely fulfills a set pattern of temple destruction followed by replacement with a mosque; three, Hindus continued to worship on the spot to the extent possible, as witnessed by travelers and locals, something they would never have done except on a specially sacred spot and in continuation of a pre-Masjid tradition.

In keeping with the internationally accepted standards of methodology and inference in scientific history-writing, we may conclude that all the indications available confirm the traditional belief, consensually held by the

local Muslims as well as Hindus, that the Babri Masjid was built in replacement of a Hindu temple where Ram worship used to take place.

In fact, this conclusion is merely a restatement of what was a matter of consensus until a few years ago. This time it is supported by a bundle of evidence, but it had been known all along. It is only recently that politically motivated academics have manufactured doubts concerning this coherent and well-attested tradition. And it is not on the strength of arguments, but exclusively through their grip on the media, that they temporarily managed to create the impression that the Hindu case was built on *myth* and *concoction*.

As Lenin, Goebbels and other masters of lies knew, it is sufficient to repeat a big lie often enough, to make it pass as truth. So, the truly outstanding feature of the Leftists' and Muslim fanatics' campaign of distortion has been its shameless persistence. No matter what hard evidence they got confronted with, the Romila Thapars and R.S. Sharmas just kept on lambasting the Hindu side for *distorting* history and *concocting evidence* and for merely *bluffing* in the face of "*incontrovertible evidence that no Ram temple ever stood on the site*". While they had not given any such evidence nor replied to the pro-Mandir evidence (they have kept on willfully ignoring B.B. Lal's affirmation of strong archaeological evidence, and have not addressed the massive documentary evidence at all)⁹, they kept up the offensive and absurdly accused the other side of not facing *the evidence*. The way the anti-Mandir falsehoods have been given wide currency in 1989-91 will make an interesting case study for future scholars. A classic in propaganda.

Chapter 2. Belief and History

2.1 The Belief in Ram

The near-certainty that the temple which stood on the Babri Masjid spot was a celebrated Ram temple, does not clinch the issue of whether Ram was actually born on that very spot. We do know that the Hindu culture, even more than most traditional cultures, has shown a tremendous capacity of preserving traditions, poetic compositions as voluminous as the Vedas, and the information contained therein. It is therefore not at all unthinkable that the birthplace of a heroic figure like Ram may have been remembered in an uninterrupted chain of tradition for several thousands of years. But then that is the maximum we can say : it is possible.

However, for the political decision of whether to give in to the Hindu demand concerning Ram's traditional birth site, it is sufficient that there is a consensus among those people who worship Ram (the contention that a number of different temples in Ayodhya all claim to be the real Janmabhoomi is, upon closer inquiry, simply not true). When on October 8, 1990 fighting broke out in Jerusalem over the *Dome on the Rock* and the Al Aqsa mosque, absolutely nobody has stood up and questioned the Muslim claim that the Al-Aqsa mosque was built over the Prophet's footprint in the rock. No one has demanded a probe into the myth that the mosque is where Mohammed landed after a flight through heaven on a winged horse. Even when most people are convinced of the impossibility of making a footprint in a rock, or of flying on a horse, they have all chosen to respect the Muslims' belief. So, why should Hindus start proving the sacredness of their sacred places?

The JNU historians have made a lot of the priority of history over *beliefs*. They have done this without making the crucial distinction between a theological belief of a dogmatic and anti-rational kind, and popular belief which is neither rational nor its opposite, but just a cherished convention at a different level of discourse (the mythical language game)^{9a}. A theological

belief is one that is essential to the defining belief system of a given religion. In Islam, two such beliefs are central : the rejection of all gods except Allah, and the Prophethood of Mohammed. Whoever doubts these, places himself outside the Muslim fold. In Roman Catholicism, theological beliefs are declared dogma. The Council statements that formulate the dogma (and which are attributed to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who is also present at the Councils), conclude with the statement that he who doesn't believe it, *anathema sit, he is banned*: non-belief in a dogma places one outside the Church. Apart from these theological beliefs that are theologically unimportant or even heterodox : concerning relics of saints, apparitions of the Virgin Mary etc.

In Hinduism, no such thing as theological dogma exists. Even those teachings that indologists consider crucial to Hinduism, can be freely rejected. Thus, A.K. Coomaraswamy, as no doubt some Hindus before him, rejected the common belief in transmigration of individual souls. Many sections of Hindu society, both in India and more so overseas, have dropped the caste system, often considered a defining component of Hinduism, without being any the less Hindu for it.

The belief that Ram was born at the disputed spot in Ayodhya is also not a matter of theology. It is not essential for Ram bhakti, and Ram bhakti in turn is not essential for being a Hindu. The belief in the Janmabhoomi is of the order of popular belief, and has only some practical (pilgrimage) but no theological implications.

The practical thrust of the entire JNU statement is that the Hindu belief regarding Ram's birthplace should not be respected: since you give no scientific proof for Ram's being born there, you will not get your temple. Instead you may get a secular national monument, where religious rituals will be forbidden by law.

If the secularists reject an arrangement that would accommodate a widespread popular belief, viz. a Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir, they should have the courage of their conviction, and take this stand wherever it applies. And they should keep up their Nehruvian habit of meddling in Israeli/Palestinian affairs. This means they should go tell the Muslims of Jerusalem that the historical fact of the Jewish Temple should have priority

over the "myths" of the Prophet's footprint and of his ride through heaven. But if they prefer, Muslims' sentiments and beliefs, then they should have the same respect of Hindu beliefs surrounding a sacred place. If they fail to show equal respect to the Muslims of Palestine and to the Hindus of India, then they discriminate on the basis of religion. Which no true secularist would ever do.

2.2 Jerusalem and Ayodhya

In the Ayodhya debate, the comparison with the Jerusalem Temple Mount controversy has been made only sparingly. And when it was made, it was mostly turned upside down. It was assumed that in both cases, a mosque is threatened with a takeover by non-Muslims, and that is the relevant similarity. Stefan de Girval has put it this way : "*(The Jews) want to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem, which was destroyed by the Romans in the first century AD. But they face the same problem and dilemma that the Hindus are facing at the Ram Janmabhoomi site.*"¹⁰ The non-Muslim communities involved in these two temple- mosque-controversies do indeed have things in common. They both have voluntarily and unilaterally set up a secular state. Their creations, upon departure of the British, were both at the same time partitions into a secular and an Islamic state. In both cases, the partition was immediately followed by an invasion from the Muslim neighbour (here there is a remarkable difference : Israel gained territory in the ensuing war, while India lost *Azad* Kashmir). They both live with a Muslim minority, which does encounter problems but is still treated far better than minorities in the surrounding Muslim countries. On the other hand, after their creation both Israel and India have had to receive many refugees, Jewish and Hindu respectively, who had to flee intense persecution in Muslim countries. Both communities have been persistently targeted by the same Muslim-Communist combine : Israel by the Arab-Soviet alliance, Hindus society by the Leftist and pro-Muslim Nehruvians and by the China-Pakistan alliance.¹¹ But all that does not make for a strict parallel in the two controversies. The differences include the following. In Jewish theology, there is a belief that only the Messiah, when he comes, should rebuild the Temple. No such belief is involved in the Ayodhya

controversy. In Jerusalem, the disputed area is a sacred place to both religions involved; in Ayodhya, the Muslims have never attached any religious importance to the site of the Babri Masjid, which was built only to humiliate the Hindus. In Jerusalem, the Muslims built their mosques in all innocence on a wasteland, where the Romans had destroyed the Jewish Second Temple centuries before; whereas in Ayodhya they most probably destroyed the temple themselves before building a mosque over it.

But the most important difference is this. In Jerusalem, a sacred place of a religious community is being used for regular worship by that community, to the exclusion of members of the other community, but it is being claimed by fanatics of this other community; in Ayodhya, exactly the same situation obtains. However, in Jerusalem the tenant community is Muslim, in Ayodhya it is non-Muslim. In Jerusalem, the fanatics who want to grab the other community's sacred place are non-Muslim, the *Faithful of the Temple Mount*, in Ayodhya they are Muslim, the BMAC and BMMCC.

This important factual contrast is compounded by a political difference. In Israel, a truly secular government is proud of Israel's policy since the liberation of Jerusalem in 1967, which has guaranteed freedom of worship to Jews, Christians and Muslims in their respective sacred places, in contrast to the ban on Christian and Jewish access to the sacred places under the previous Islamic regime. This secular government has given the Jewish fanatics no chance to challenge the status-quo, and is not ready to make any concession to them, or to force a compromise with them on the tenant Muslim community.

In India, by contrast, some governments have been succeeding each other, that have not been all that secularly impartial in religious controversies, in spite of their comprising vehemently secularist parties. These governments have amply lent their ears to the fanatics who challenge the functional status-quo and intend to snatch the sacred place from the tenant community. For clarity's sake, it may be repeated that the tenant community is, since 1949, the Hindu community. And the Hindus want to keep the functional status-quo, viz. the Ram temple remains a Ram temple, even while its architecture may be changed from a mosque-like domed structure to a traditional Mandir structure. But instead of unflinchingly

upholding their right to their sacred place, the government pressurizes them to give in to the BMAC and BMMCC demands, or at least to accept a mid-way compromise.

So, the Temple Mount is not a Jewish Ayodhya¹² rather a Muslim Ayodhya. We should of course not take the comparison too far, for that would only lead into distortions. Yet, it so happened that there is one more analogy. In both places the autumn of 1990 has witnessed a bloodbath among the tenant community, inflicted by police bullets. In Jerusalem, police killed around twenty people when, according to the official report, they were throwing stones at Jews praying at the Wailing Wall (the only leftover of the Second Temple).¹³ In Ayodhya, police killed sixteen, or one hundred and sixty- eight, or five hundred, or who knows, people who were unarmed and singing Ram Dhun. And this similarity is again compounded by a stark difference : the Jerusalem shooting triggered as much as a UN resolution against the Israeli government, but the Ayodhya shooting triggered absolutely nothing as far as the Human Rights professionals are concerned.

Chapter 3. Righting the Wrongs of History

3.1 The Bricks or the Truth

Advani is the modern Babar, that is how some secularist Hindus (who at least don't deny the historical fact that Babar was a temple-destroyer) comment on Mr. Advani's plan to relocate the disputed structure and build a temple on the spot. With their natural Hindu generosity, they want to keep assuring the non-Hindus that their places of worship are safe in Hindusthan. And they reject attempts to undo temple destruction by means of mosque-destruction. "*Two wrongs don't make a right*", they keep on writing.

And it is true: if someone has stolen from you, it is not right to just steal it back from him, or from his children. Not even if *it* is a place of worship. The best solution would be, that the culprit, or his juridical successor if any such be, returns the stolen good of his own free will. The second best solution is that an impartial competent authority, in application of principles universally in force or mutually agreed upon, imposes a settlement that undoes the wrong done. Either way, the matter should be settled openly, not by counter- theft.

In the controversy under consideration, the best solution is, that the Muslim community makes a gesture to undo the wrongs it has inflicted on the non-Muslims for centuries. Failing that the second best solution would be, that the government imposes such a goodwill gesture: that would then not be a gesture of reconciliation, but at least an official recognition of the injustice done and the resolve to at least symbolically undo such injustice.

Some diehard Hindus activists demand that all the thousands of mosques built on top of destroyed temples, be handed over to the Hindus. They think that would be a physical undoing of the historical wrongs. Well, that is a very crude way of doing justice to Hinduism. It overlooks the fact that these

stone structures are but the outermost layer of the real harm done to Hindu society. There has been a loss of vast territories -- they may be claimed back, but that would hardly be any less superficial. Far more fundamental is the moral damage that has been done : the loss of self-confidence, the unprecedented and harsh enmity within Hindu society (internal enmity and bitterness typically occur in powerless groups), the boot-licking attitude among the Hindu intelligentsia, the negative self-image (e.g. Hindu caste inequality vs. Muslim brotherhood). The moral damage again is partly due to a loss of knowledge and memory : the Hindu education system has been destroyed, and the Hindus are helpless in the face of concerted efforts to disinform them and destroy their soul.

Claiming from thousands of local Muslim communities that they give back the place of worship that their ancestors had stolen from the Hindus, would be very insensitive and create immense resentment and ill-will. It is a case of *Fiat justitia pereat mundus* (justice be done even if the world must perish for it). Sometimes unpleasant steps cannot be avoided, but in this case it seems to me that Hindus had better concentrate on more useful goals.

Among these more urgent goals, I will mention social justice, but I won't stress it too much because firstly, that would confirm the untruthful missionary propaganda, today repeated by almost everyone, that Hindu society has been less just and humane than other societies in comparable circumstances, and secondly, I don't want to fall into the Christian/moralistic trap of considering an ethical life and an ethical society the ultimate good. Having known some society-improvement movements from within (such as the disarmament movement), I have not much faith left in moralistic attempts to make society better, as a goal in its own right.

I have come to agree with the basic assumption of Hindu culture, that consciousness is the basis of everything. Ethics and justice are necessary in human society, but they are not the ultimate in human endeavor and happiness. Forget about a humane society if you do not create a cultural (dharmik as much as sanskritik) cradle for it. Do-gooders like Rajmohan Gandhi (with his Moral Rearmament background) can go on preaching about *caring* and *sharing*¹⁴, that is superficial, doctoring of outside

symptoms, and by itself it will lead nowhere. Social involvement should be there, but it can only be guided and sustained by a larger cultural feel and consciousness. It is only from an awareness of our fundamental (adhyatmik) akinness, from a feeling of our unity (ekatmata) in diversity (every entity its own swadharma), that compassion and fellow-feeling can grow. And it is only through self-respect that a larger sense of duty and responsibility can grow; the crass selfishness now rampant in Nehruvian India is very much related to the cultural climate of self-alienation and self depreciation.

So, the more fundamental concern should be the reviving of Hindu consciousness, both in a spiritual and in an intellectual sense. Of all the politicians involved in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, how many have ever taken parliamentary initiatives to revive Sanskrit education, to give more chances to the teaching of the Hindu cultural traditions, to abolish the discrimination against teaching Hindu religion in state-subsidized schools? How many have taken a look into the systematic distortion of history that is being broadcast by all the official media including the school curricula, and taken the official media including the school curricula, and taken initiatives to counter it at the intellectual or political level? It seems that all these Hindu campaigners needed a crudely physical issue like the bricks in Ayodhya in order even to get reminded of their responsibility to Hindu society.

I cannot blame them too harshly, they just show the results of a centuries-long physical and ideological attack on Hindu culture. Nonetheless, if they want to give proof of something better than utter mental laziness, they must start cultivating a deeper understanding of the problems of their society, and develop a commitment to the restoration of Hindu self-awareness. That is more important than the restoration of brick structures.

I am not saying that they just should forget about these thousands of temples razed and replaced with mosques (and sometimes churches). Those thousands should not be ignored, to the extent that they can be useful in consciousness-raising. One level at which some evil-intentioned people try to rob Hindus of their consciousness, is history. History as an illustration of the intrinsic character of certain ideologies deserves to be highlighted. The time will come when closed theologies will bother humanity no longer, but

for now, it is better to be aware of what they can do. In Europe, Nazi concentration camps are kept in their historical state, in order to teach future generations about what to avoid. In India too, monuments of intolerance should be preserved. School books, local guide books, even a signboard with an explanatory text in front of the building, should tell the history of every place of worship, truthfully.

If Hindu organizations really care about Hinduism, let them drop the demand for the hand-over, let them rather demand that the truth be told on every appropriate occasion. They should not allow the truth to be concealed or distorted. On the other hand, they should deal sensitively with it. There is no point in troubling simple Muslim villagers with the unasked-for-truth about the crimes of Aurangzeb. They did not commit these Islamic crimes, and educating them should ideally not proceed via instilling in them a feeling of guilt.

In any case, education about the crimes and future crime potential of pretentious closed creeds should only be a part of a more general study in the impediments to open mindedness and truthfulness : the closed creeds of the revealed religions are only a special case (though a very systematic and dangerous one) of a certain state of mind. This study of what kinds of mental attitude to avoid, should be integrated into a positive education in mental culture and truthfulness. That is what Sanatana Dharma is all about. Today, saying the truth about the crimes of Islam, against attempts to suppress it, is very much needed. But ultimately, these negative things have to be said only to clear the way for the positive and humanist culture which these fanatical creeds had denounced and tried to obliterate.

The prime target audience for the truthful reporting about Hindu-Muslim history is not the Muslims, but the Hindus themselves. the Hindus are their own worst problem, because of their self-alienation, self- denigration, and self-forgetfulness. They should stop blaming and maligning themselves : a clear and truthful view of the mischievous history and doctrines of those who go on blaming and denigrating Hinduism, will make room for an honest self-discovery. Hindus can turn the tables on the *Hindu-baiters*. They should take pride in their pluralistic culture, and be conscious of the dangers of closed and exclusivistic creeds.

So, by all means, drop the demand for the hand-over of those thousands of brick structures in which fellow human beings with Arabic names conduct their prayers. It is enough if the truth about those buildings' histories is not concealed.

3.2. Kashi and Mathura

The Hindu struggle is about cultural self-awareness and self-esteem, not about brick structures. However, there may be a case for insisting on the hand-over of two central sacred places, those of Krishna and of Shiva, that are occupied by mosques, and the very special case of the Ram Janmabhoomi. People with a very short historic consciousness think that everything that happened before the Indians said goodbye to the British and installed a British legal-political system for themselves, should not have any consequences today. It is time-barred, they say. But who are they to rule that history should be held to be of no consequence? Perhaps the Hindus do think that certain historical wrongs have been so vast as well as profound, that they need righting even today. Especially because the ideology that motivated these wrongs is not yet a part of history.

The situation is this, Muslim conquerors and rulers have made systematic attempts to destroy Hindu culture, and as long as that was not immediately possible, many of them have done everything to humiliate the Hindus. And this was not an accidental list of cruel rulers, to be joined to the list of Genghis Khan, Ch'in Shih Huang, Tiglatpileasar and other classics of cruel conquest and rule : there was an ideological backbone in this sustained effort to impose Islam and persecute the Kafirs. Aurangzeb is gone, but that ideological backbone may still be there. One of the crowning symbols of the Muslim persecution of the Hindus was the replacement of the most sacred Hindu temples with mosques.

Now, either the conflict between Islam and Hinduism no longer exists. The Muslims no longer identify with the persecution effort of their forebears. In that case, they will have no problem in distancing themselves from the take-over of temples, and in understanding the Hindu sensitivity concerning this painful past. They will understand that they themselves

would not like to be robbed of their Kaaba, and they will give back the chief places sacred to Shiva and Krishna.

Or, in the other case, the Muslims do identify with Babar and Aurangzeb, and stick to the doctrine that the Kafirs must be fought and their temples destroyed. In that case, they are the heirs to the responsibility for the temple destructions, and then the Hindus can demand reparations from them. Either way, some symbolic reparation should be made. Some gesture of finishing this history of temple-destructions and attempted destruction of Hindu Dharma, should be made.

In my opinion, the Hindus should not demand the handover of the Kashi Vishvanath (Shiva) temple site and the Krishna Janmasthan temple site from the state. But they may demand it from the Muslim community.¹⁵ And they should make it a demand not for a building, but for a gesture. There should be not a trace of a threat of forcible take-over. The Hindu leaders should say to the Muslim leaders : **Look, we want these places back. For many centuries they have been our sacred places, and we have suffered the mosques built there only under duress. We do not believe in the forcible take-over of places of worship, we are not Babars and Aurangzebs. But we want from you a gesture of goodwill, a sign that you turn this infamous persecution page of history. We will not take any kind of revenge if you do not feel ready for this gesture, but we will expressly wait until you are ready.**

The same would have counted in principle for the Ram Janmabhoomi. However, there the situation has been slightly more advanced : in 1949 it already became a Hindu temple again. And it is not the Hindus who have been demanding a hand-over, it is actually the Muslim groups like BMAC, BMMCC, IUML, Jama'at Islami. It is unbelievably arrogant that some Muslims could be against the hand-over of even one of the thousands of stolen Hindu places, and still have dared to demand the hand-over of that one mosque that they let slip through their fingers in 1949. They demand the return of 100% of the places they lost, and want to return 0% of the places they took. Who said that Islam believes in equality?

To sum up : on the Ram Janmabhoomi, the Hindus should concede nothing. It is their own temple again since 1949, and if they want to

architecturally redesign it along the lines of traditional Mandir architecture, then that is an entirely internal affair of the Hindus. On Kashi Vishvanath and Krishna Janmasthan, the Hindus may choose to leave it at the present compromise situation (temple rebuilt next to mosque), but it is not unreasonable and they are within their rights if they make a moral demand on the Muslim community to return these two sacred places. The demand should focus not on the buildings, but rather on the free-will gesture of a hand-over to formally finish the history of Hindu-Muslim conflict. Concerning the thousands of other stolen or destroyed temples, no organisation devoted to the advancement of Hindu culture and society should rake up those controversies. On the contrary, Hindus should be satisfied with a clear and frank recognition of the history of these places. For the rest, these places are occasions for a thousandfold generous gesture of forgive and forget.

3.3. A gesture, not a compensation

The problem with forgiving is that genuine forgiving can only take place if the committed wrongs are admitted (forgiving someone who doesn't deplore his act but still thinks it was justified, is tantamount to inviting him to do it again; it is not forgiveness but masochism). What Hindus are in fact demanding from the Muslim leadership, is an uninhibited recognition of the injustice their forebears have inflicted upon the Hindus. There would be no need for a good-will gesture if there had not been some serious injustice in the past. Such recognition of the past would be implicit in an official Muslim acceptance of the Hindu rights over Ram Janmabhoomi, in fact it would be the most important thing about it. But this historical recognition is the hardest part of the whole situation. Not even concerning one single contentious place are the Muslim communal leaders willing to openly concede that there was anything wrong with Babar's behaviour. What is so difficult about such acceptance of past wrongs?

In 1989-90, the Japanese people have, via both their prime minister and their new emperor, openly expressed their regrets over the oppression meted out by them to the Korean people in the half-century before 1945. No one has interrupted them to say that this was a long- forgotten affair, time-

barred, sterile raking-up of old quarrels. On the contrary, everybody involved realizes that this little apology is the very real beginning of a new Japanese-Korean understanding and, in the longer run, of a renewed friendship.

What makes it more difficult for the Indian Muslims to make such an apology to the Hindus, than for the Japanese to the Koreans? One reason is probably that the Japanese people does not constitute an ideological unit. The ideology of Japanese supremacy and militarism, which determined Japan's policies in the decades before 1945, has disappeared and left room for a recognition of the crimes which to a supremacist people seemed justified, but are not considered such any longer. The new willingness to come to terms with the past has been made possible by a real change in Japan's dominant ideology. Now, that change does not endanger Japan : a country does not have a permanent ideology, yet it has a kind of permanent identity, independent of ideological fashions.

For the Muslim community, the situation is radically different. The admission of wrongs done in application of the Islamic ideology, would immediately endanger the adherence to that ideology. Well, many Hindus have believed that untouchability was an integral part of Hinduism and given it up nonetheless, confident as they were that Hinduism is not a *seamless* garment, but rather an ocean from which you can afford to take important quantities away without really diminishing it. But Muslim leaders are afraid that the admission of the systematic wrong done to the Hindus in direct application of unambiguous tenets of Islam, would seriously damage the integrity of the seamless garment of Islam. If you disown the persecution part of history, and implicitly also the persecution part of the doctrine, then where will this disowning stop? A scar on the nose is a scar on the face, and the repudiation of one Islamic doctrine (**jihad**) is the repudiation of Islam.

The Japanese have remained Japanese even after shedding their supremacist ideology, but will the Muslims, who are defined by their adherence to an ideology, remain Muslims once parts of this ideology are officially discredited? In this sense, openly facing the facts of the persecution part of Muslim history may really endanger the belief in Islam

and therefore the very existence of the Muslim community as such. That is why the Muslim communal leadership will not even consider any formal admission of the bloody past. Their only chance is to depict the Muslim atrocities as *aberrations* from the true Islamic path of tolerance and peace (as some friends of Islam have been doing). But they are well aware that this really implies declaring much of the Prophet's own behaviour to be *aberration* and *un-Islamic*, as well as the behaviour of revered Muslim heroes who merely imitated the Prophet's example and implemented Quranic commandments. So, while many innocent common Muslims would not mind restoring a place of worship to the Hindus, the communal leadership is aware of its larger doctrinal implications, and refuses to give in.

It should be stressed that what Hindus are demanding is not a full compensation, not revenge, not getting even. Getting even would take millions of killings and acts of slave-taking, acts of temple destruction and so on, and that would still not bring the victims of Islamic fanaticism back to life. So, getting even is out of the question. Revenge is still something else. It would include the destruction of the most sacred places of Islam, like the Kaaba. That plan has not been formulated either. The point in this case is merely a symbolic restoration of one or three ancient Hindu sacred places, a formal gesture. Even that, the Muslim leadership is not willing to make, so far.

3.4. Enactment of status-quo

However, quite a number of individual Muslims have expressed their willingness to make a goodwill gesture and leave the Ram Janmabhoomi site to the Hindus. Most of them demand in return the enactment of a law fixing the status-quo for all places of worship as on August 15, 1947, or at least as on January 26, 1950. This demand has also been made, without any offer in return, by the militant Muslim organizations.

Well, such a law does not immediately seem objectionable. Not that it exists in any secular country. It is the product of the Indian situation, where the Muslims have grabbed a whole lot of places of worship without being

able to eliminate or even marginalize the pre-existent society. So now they face the threat that the victimized party demands restoration, and such a law protects them against this embarrassing eventuality.

Hindus have nothing to gain from such a law. Hindu temples up for dispute are very few. While Hindus historians have published long lists of mosques built on demolished temples, no-one has come forward with a similar list of Hindu temples. An impression has been created by the dishonest crowd of secularists that there are many Hindu temples that once were Buddhist. Well, let them start with pointing out where these temples are. Let them secondly bring up documentary or archaeological indications for a forcible rather than a mutually voluntary take-over. And let them show that there is an existing Buddhist community with a genuine use in taking over such a temple. I am sure that Hindus will not object, even regardless of whether the same procedure is applied to mosques that have forcibly replaced temples.

[The Bodh Gaya temple case](#), in which Buddhists and non- Buddhists have co-operated to restore this erstwhile Buddhist place of pilgrimage, has clearly proven this willingness on the part of the Hindu leadership. The British interference and the stubbornness of one temple priest have drawn out the process over several decades, but since 1953 the Bodh Gaya temple is functioning as the Buddhist shrine it originally was.¹⁶

Two facts about the Bodh Gaya temple case are particularly inconvenient for the secularist theory of Hindu-Buddhist antagonism. One is that a decisive role in the settlement was played by the "*Hindu communalist*" organization Hindu Mahasabha. The second is that the Bodh Gaya temple was never forcibly taken over nor destroyed by the Hindus.

The Buddhists abandoned the place when they were exterminated by the Islamic invaders, around 1200 AD. It was lying there, deteriorating, even after a Shaiva monk order came to inhabit the domain in 1590. Only around 1880 did a Hindu priest move in to use the building as a temple, after efforts by the king of Myanmar to repair it were stopped because of the Burmese war. The priest was pressured by the British not to make concessions to the foreign (Lankan and, more seriously, Japanese) Buddhists who were working to revive this Buddhist place of pilgrimage. It was this priest's

successor who would thwart all attempts at settlement, even when these involved Swami Vivekananda and Surendranath and Rabindranath Tagore. But the settlement won through. Hindus had never forcibly taken the place from the Buddhists, and yet (or should I say : and that's why) they have shown sensitivity to the Buddhists' attachment to the temple, and restored it as one of Buddhism's chief places of pilgrimage.

If there are more such places (and the anti-Hindu crowd claims there are many), let these secularists put their evidence on the table. As a man of scientific temper, I will not forgive them if they repeat their allegation without substantiating it. You see, the case with allegations is simple : either you prove them, or you withdraw them and offer apologies. The secularists should not get away with doing neither one of these two.

Hindus have, until proof to the contrary, no temples to protect from historical claims, and so they have nothing to gain from a law fixing the status of places of worship. But since I don't think these buildings are really the point, I also don't think such a law would hurt the Hindu cause very much. However, it would be wrong to agree to the enactment of such a law as a quid pro quo for the *hand-over* of the Ram Janmabhoomi site. Since you don't have to pay for what is yours, Hindus should not give anything in return for the Ram Janmabhoomi. And Muslims will show that their new respect for Hindu sacred places is genuine by not making it conditional. The enactment of a further status-quo should be considered on its own merits and not as a part of a deal.

3.5. International standards

And that brings us back to the question : should the wrongs of history be righted? If international custom is anything to go by, yes. Right now, many court cases are being fought in the *New World*, by Native Americans and Australian Aborigines, to claim back ancestral sacred places and other property. Some are lost, some are won. Even in some of the cases they lost, it was a technicality or whatever else that came in the way, but the principle that the wrongs of history may have to be righted, was not questioned as

such. And every case which the *natives* have won, is a moral support for the restoration of Hindu sacred places.

In the Soviet Union too, many places of worship that were confiscated and turned into storing-rooms, offices and what not, are being given back to the religious communities. The fact that the victimized communities had managed to do without these buildings for so long, and the fact that now all these offices etc. had to be moved, was not taken as a sufficient excuse for keeping the status-quo.

The situation in India is not fundamentally different from that in the Communist countries and in the New World. In each case, a wave of ideologically sustained rapine and destruction has taken place. The ideologies that gave a good conscience to the mass murders, ruthless oppression and thorough cultural destruction, are of the same stock.

Moses taught the Hebrew people a religion which divided humanity in two : the Chosen People and the rest It divided space in two : the Promised land and the rest It divided time in two : the time before the Covenant (between Yahweh and His People) and the unfoldment of God's plan starting with the Covenant.^{[17](#)}

For Moses, anything was allowed if it fulfilled God's plan of giving the Promised Land to the Chosen People.^{[18](#)} Fortunately, in later centuries, when the Jews had no political power left, they transformed their self- righteous religion into a strongly ethical religion with a mystical dimension and a pluralistic culture of Scripture interpretation through intellectual discussion.

However, the seed of Moses was still there, and it was taken up by Christianity. Christianity again divided humanity into Christians (saved ones) and Pagans (doomed ones). This automatically divided space into two : the Christian countries and the Pagan countries. But while the Jews had limited their ambition to the Promised Land, Christianity wanted to convert the whole world. As the New Testament had said, in seeming innocence: "*Go and teach all the peoples*". It also divided time into two: the time when the original sin reigned supreme, and the era of Jesus Christ, the Saviour, our Lord (marked as AD, Anno Domini, year of the Lord).

Mohammed, who used to travel to the Christian city Damascus as an agent of his wife Khadija's company, brought monotheism and prophethood to Arabia. He divided humanity into two, the believers and the unbelievers. He divided the world into two: the Muslim-ruled countries, or Dar-ul-Islam, and the rest, called Dar-ul-Harb, the land of strife. Again, this was not meant as a permanent co-existence : the land of the believers had to inflict Harb on the Dar-ul-Harb until it could swallow all of it. Islam also divided time into two : the Jahiliya or *ignorance*, before the Prophet (peace be upon him), and the time of Islam, which will last until the day of Judgment.

Marxism is the latest and shortest-lived offshoot of this lineage of closed and aggressive creeds. Its God is history, which is a one-dimensional version of the Christian-Islamic doctrine of "*God's plan unfolding in history*". It divides humanity in two: the progressive forces, who have history on their side (today: the proletariat), and the rest, who will be wiped out of history soon. It divides time into two: before and after the revolution. It divides the world into two: the Socialist Republics where the proletariat is in power and does its redeeming work of establishing classless society, and the rest, where the revolution is yet to take place.

The one thing these three world-conquering creeds have in common, is their boundless self-righteousness in overrunning the societies of the non-chosen peoples. They have respected nothing of what was sacred to the Pagans, often not even their lives. Where these three have come in conflict with each other, they have not spared each other either, witness the Crusades and the Spanish Reconquista, the treatment meted out to the Christians in Muslim countries, the Armenian genocide, the wholesale persecution of (an already softened) Christianity in the Soviet block, the confrontations between the Chinese and the Uighurs, the persecution of the Communists in Khomeini's Iran. Each of them, in its prime, has (had) the unshakable conviction that it is bound to conquer the world, and that ultimately no opponent would survive to give testimony against its outrageous crimes.

But what goes up, must come down. Religions that are not sanatana, ingrained in human nature and therefore age- old, religions that have a beginning, are also bound to end. There was no Christianity before Christ,

no Islam before Mohammed, no Marxism before Marx : therefore the creeds of Christ, Mohammed and Marx are bound to end. So if Hindus wait long enough, these thousands of mosques built on destroyed temples, will all fall back into their lap. They will be abandoned, or Muslim-born people will convert them into Pagan establishments themselves.

The situation today is that Christianity is losing its teeth, and meteoric Marxism will be dead even earlier. In the ex-Soviet block, Marxism is not offering any resistance anymore to the comeback of whatever cultural or religious movements had existed in society. Not only the Christians and the Muslims, but also the Buddhists in the Mongolian republics are benefiting from Marxism's giving up. Christianity is gradually coming to face its history, and is having to cope increasingly with a cultural reaction from peoples who got subdued in the colonial period, but who now start questioning the history of their acceptance of Christianity, notably in Latin America and in Africa. While the missionary programme has not been given up, forcible conversions and other acts of violence against other cultures are out of fashion. Christianity is no physical threat anymore, and not even a cultural threat either for those who see through the missionary strategy.

The situation is different with Islam. For a very clear example of the difference between Christianity and Islam today, consider the situation in the Soviet Union. Many of the erstwhile Soviet Republics want independence, or at least a stop to the Russian rule which the Soviet Union had effectively brought. In most cases, religion is strongly present in these independence movements. Now, in the Christian-dominated Baltic states, anti- Russian feelings have been voiced through demonstrations, painting over Russian signboards, and other such citizens' protest. In the Muslim-dominated Central-Asian republics, by contrast, Russian girls were stripped naked on the street and gang-raped, many Russians have been killed, and finally most Russians had no choice but to flee their homes and seek safety with relatives in the Russian Federation. This stark difference in behaviour between Christians and Muslims is not at all a coincidence.

Now Indian secularists may intone their worn-out tirades of how this *prejudice against Islam* will vitiate the communal atmosphere. But I cannot

help the verifiable fact that the Russians, India's big friends, have massively fled their homes in the Muslim-majority areas of their erstwhile empire. It is at the hands of Muslim re-assertion that they have received such a barbaric treatment that they saw no alternative but to flee.

Islam has till today retained a lot of its medieval self- righteousness. While native Americans who claim back ancestral sacred places may have to confront economical interests, juridical technicalities or other small-human opposition against their demands, there is now hardly any ideologically motivated resistance against respecting their culture and their historical sensitivities. But in India, and in the countries which Islam has carved out of it, there is still a strong presence of an ideological drive to islamize India, and to make this clear by wresting all kinds of real and symbolical concessions from the Hindus, and by refusing them any concession whatsoever in return. The symbols of humiliation that have been inflicted on the Hindus, are being defended.

Therefore, unfortunately, it is only in a very crude material sense that the disputes over mosques built over temples is a raking up of past events. At the ideological level, the struggle is continuing today. That makes the demand for an explicit Muslim gesture of reconciliation and Wiedergutmachung all the more justified.

Chapter 4. Ram Janmabhoomi and the Courts

4.1 A Non-Mosque

The juridical debate concerning the Ram Janmabhoomi site centres around two questions :

1. Can a court adjudicate in a matter concerning historical wrongs, dating to before the present political set-up, and extending far beyond the case at hand, which has acquired a symbol value in precisely this larger issue of righting historical wrongs?
2. If not, i.e. if the court can only deal with this at its material face value, as a dispute of ownership or of the right of access or use, then whose building is it? We will start with the second question.

A very important element in the juridical debate is the actual status of the disputed place before the Hindu take-over in 1949. The Hindu side says that it was an abandoned building since 1936. They might, on top of this claim, invoke the principle that *"if you have land and you don't cultivate it, it's not yours"*, a principle which several Muslims have mentioned to me as a fine example of how socially progressive Islam really is. The Muslim side says it was a full-fledged mosque up till December 22, 1949.

A mr. Hashim Kidwai has written¹⁹ that mr. Advani's claim that no namaz was offered in the Babri Masjid since 1936, a full thirteen years before the Hindu take-over, "is not based on facts". To substantiate his counter-claim, he brings up the most first-hand kind of evidence : *"My father was posted at Faizabad as Deputy Collector from 1939 to 1941 and I, along with my mother and other members of my family, visited the Babari mosque in October 1939 and again in October 1941 and offered the Zuhar (noon) prayers there."*

I readily believe this man's testimony, especially because it does not prove what he wanted to prove. It proves that the Babri Masjid was still considered a mosque, and had not been transformed into anything else. In fact, it clearly prove that some Muslims still went there to offer prayers. However, the fact that someone who wants to prove that the place was still in use in 1936-49, merely says that his family went there twice (visiting it) in more than two years, and does not say that he saw with his own eyes that the Muslim community gathered there every Friday, is a strong indication that the place no longer was a community mosque in regular use.

I have so far not seen any document that settles the matter in a conclusive way. But then, that is more to the disadvantage of the Muslim than of the Hindu side. If the Muslim community was effectively using the place, then in those thirteen years under discussion it should have produced some documents proving it.

In a memorandum of Muslim MLA's from Uttar Pradesh to the chief minister²⁰, not more is claimed than that prayers were offered until 21/12/1949 *without any restriction*. It is a fact that there was no restriction on offering prayers, but in all this happy unrestrictedness, how many devotees effectively came to pray? These MLA's are not even claiming that the place was the community mosque for a designated group of local Muslims, let alone proving it.

In a comment on the VHP list of documents presented to the government of India (6/10/89), the BMMCC again fails to make this full claim.²¹ Commenting on two documents which the VHP has included as supporting its case, two Waqf documents of 1940 and 1941, the BMMCC can only dismiss them as *not very legible*, and then quickly jumps to comment on the events of 1949 when "*Muslims of the place were being subjected to harassment and prevented from offering namaz in the Babri Masjid*". Reading *not very legible* documents is not going to convince many people.

The long list of AIBMAC documents presented to the government on December 23, 1990, again merely contain proof that the Muslims had legal access to the place, not that it actually was their regular prayer-ground.

The claim that the Babri Masjid was a normally functioning community mosque up till 1949, is also rendered unlikely by what happened just before the take-over. It seems that the *appearance* of the idols on 22 December 1949 was not at all unannounced. Justice Deoki Nandan Agarwala mentions, in an appendix to an open letter to the prime minister²², that on 16 October 1949, group recitation of the entire Tulsi Ramayana started in different places in an around the disputed property in order to purify it, and the Ram devotees removed the remnants of the graves of the Ganj-i Shaheedan (Martyrs' place, the burial ground of the Muslim victims of the 1855 battle over the nearby Hanuman Garhi temple). If the place had been in regular use as a community mosque, this would have been impossible, or at least it would have occasioned serious riots.

The course of Muslim participation in litigation over the site is also not really compatible with the continuous use of the Masjid up to 1949. If the Sunni Waqf Board was effectively managing the Masjid in 1949, why did it not immediately start litigation to reclaim its stolen property, especially since the theft would have interfered with the community life of the local Muslims in a very frontal way ? In fact, the Sunni Waqf Board only entered litigation in 1961, just five days before the twelfth anniversary of the take-over, on which date any claims became time-barred.

Also, in its 1961 plaint, the Sunni Waqf Board is conspicuously silent about any details of an actual mosque management : who was effectively in charge of the Masjid as its mutwalli, if at all there was one ? When was the repair of the building (damaged in 1934 riots) by the British authorities completed, and when was namaz resumed ? The Waqf Board has nothing more to offer than the general assertion that namaz was offered both and after the said repairs. As we have seen, that statement is correct in the sense that the place was available for namaz, so that individual Muslims could go there, but so far not substantiated in the sense that it was used for regular community prayers.

After the enactment of the U.P. Muslim Waqfs Act in 1936, the District Waqf Commissioner of Faizabad made a complete inquiry, and the fact that he really had to *inquire* again shows how non-alive the Masjid was. In his report (16/9/38), he does mention someone who was known as, and called

himself, the mutwalli of the Babri Masjid. The man, Syed Mohammed Zaki, was a Shia and traced his ancestry and his job to Mir Baqi, also a Shia. However, he was an opium addict, unsuited for his duties, and this could be seen from the neglected state of the Masjid. So, according to this official Waqf report, the place was neglected; and apparently, nobody in the Ayodhya Muslim community was doing anything about it. And even after the report was submitted, and even after it was published in the gazette of the Sunni Waqf Board in 1944, neither the Sunni nor the Shia Waqf Board stepped in to effectively take care of the Masjid.²³

Incidentally, it seems that the name Babri Masjid became the official term from this report onwards, as before it was mostly referred to as Masjid-i Janmasthan.

What Shias and Sunnis did do, was to quarrel over whether it was a Shia or a Sunni mosque. Again, their argumentation centered around historical claims, such as that Babar was a Sunni, and that Mir Baqi was a Shia. It did not focus on the actual use of the mosque, claiming that the users were mostly Shias (c.q. Sunnis), or whether they did the Shia or the Sunni thing on the festival Muharram. The British court ruled, in March 1946, that it was a Sunni Waqf property, but that it had been shared by Sunnis and Shias, in the sense that there was *no prohibition* for either to use it.

From a report dated 10/12/1949, by Waqf inspector Mohammed Ibrahim, it is clear that the official mutwalli of the Babri Masjid was systematically the nambardar (revenue collector) of the village Sahanwa, several miles away but still in the Faizabad district. This Shia functionary was automatically deemed to be in charge of the Babri Masjid, which otherwise did not have any manager of its own. But the Babri Masjid job was only nominal, and the mosque was not taken care of.

The report also said that due to fear of the Hindus and Sikhs, nobody offered namaz in the Babri Masjid, and that travellers who stayed there for the night were abused and harassed by the Hindus from the near-by establishments. We should see this state of affairs against the background of the 1934 riots around the Babri Masjid, triggered by a cowslaughter. These riots made many victims and the building was seriously damaged. Several people were killed inside the mosque, which desecrated it in Muslim eyes.

According to justice Deoki Nandan, even after the British had the building repaired, the Muslims did not come/return to effectively use the mosque, for fear of the Hindus, especially the martial monks of the three nearby Akharas (Nirmohi, Nirvana and Digambar).

It is even disputed whether the Masjid was effectively used before 1934, and even before 1855. Dr. Harsh Narain has summarized an 1858 document by one Muhammad Asghar (demanding the removal of the Ram platform just outside the Masjid) : **He has mentioned that the place of Janmasthan has been lying unkempt/in disorder (parishan) for hundreds of years, and that the Hindus performed worship there.**²⁴

A second document that dr. Narain quotes, is a paragraph from a book by local Urdu writer Mirza Rajab Ali Beg Surur : *"A great mosque was built on the spot where Sita ki Rasoi is situated. During the reign of Babar, the Hindus had no guts to be match for the Muslims... Aurangzeb built a mosque on the Hanuman Garhi... The Bairagis effaced the [Aurangzebi] mosque and erected a temple in its place. Then idols began to be worshipped openly in the Babari mosque where the Sita ki Rasoi is situated."* So the grip of the Muslims on the sacred places of central Ayodhya was so weak that they couldn't even prevent the demolition of a mosque. In that context, mr. Surur's observation on the Babri Masjid may well indicate what it says, viz. that the Babri Masjid was abandoned by the Muslims and even sometimes used by the Hindus (until it was prevented, perhaps in 1855, or at any rate by the British from 1856 onwards).

The testimony by the Austrian Jesuit Joseph Tieffenthaler, who visited Ayodhya in 1767, also seems to be saying that the Masjid had been re-occupied by the Hindus.²⁵ What is more, neither he nor, to my knowledge, any of the Muslim sources, mentions Muslim worship in the Babri Masjid. These are indications for what many common people in Ayodhya have told me : that the Babri Masjid has not been a real mosque for most of its history. With such a prehistory, it also becomes understandable that the local Muslim community in the 1930s and 1940s could have a mosque standing there and yet not use it. What kept them away, just like (according to the above mentioned sources) in the days of Nawabi rule, was the Hindu presence. The Hindus did not dare to defy the British rulings concerning the

place, but were nonetheless strong enough to constitute a threat for Muslims who wanted to assert too much of a presence.

As against the strong indications that the mosque was not really functional, it is reported that there is one very authoritative witness to the contrary still alive today : Maulvi Gaffar, described as "the Imam of Ayodhya's erstwhile Jama Masjid... The last time he had led the Friday prayers at the Babri Masjid was 41 years ago, on December 22, 1949. Then the idols appeared and the District Magistrate K.K. Nayar asked him to suspend activities in the masjid for three to four weeks, while an inquiry was made. The 90-year old Imam says he is still waiting to resume his vocation."²⁶

Of course, this testimony is presented in a very secularist paper, and I have found out by now that secularist journalists have no scruples at all about wrongly describing or misquoting their interviewees. Compared to the testimony of Waqf and Court documents, that is still no reliable counter-proof. In fact it is rather strange that the BMMCC in its reply to the VHP presentation of documents, does not mention this testimony. So far, to my knowledge, this testimony has not brought up by the pro-Babri side in any context where hard (challengeable and verifiable) proof is required.

Yet, judicially the Babri case may stand or fall with the proof that it was a regular mosque up to 1949. After all, the Court Order of the Civil Judge, Faizabad, of March 3, 1951, based its decision to guarantee the Hindu plaintiff the right of worship in the building, partly on the information that it had not been used as a mosque since at least 1936 : *"It further appears from the copies of a number of affidavits of certain Muslim residents of Ayodhya that at least from 1936 onwards the Muslims have neither used the site as a mosque nor offered prayers there... Nothing has been pointed to discredit these affidavits..."*²⁷ If the man described as the erstwhile Imam did not go to court at that time to contradict the statements by his fellow Muslims, well, then I would doubt he really was the Babri Masjid Imam. Until the judge's assumption is disproven, this must count as the official version : on the strength of local Muslim testimony, the Babri Masjid was not in regular use since at least 1936. If any firm counter-proof had come up by now, I

guess we would have seen it : the pro-Babri faction has enough media at its disposal to present the strong points in its case.

Nevertheless, to conclude the discussion of the status of the Babri Masjid just before its conversion into a Ram Mandir, I cannot say that either side's case is as yet 100% convincing. There have certainly been individual Muslims offering namaz in the Babri Masjid in the forties, but from the available evidence it seems that it was not a regular mosque functioning as the real community centre of the local Muslims.

Apart from the factual question of the effective status of the disputed building in 1949, a judicial settlement of the dispute would have to base itself on technicalities like Waqf (and other trusts) property jurisprudence and the division of the domain in three parts with different ownership titles. I will not go into those here.²⁸ Before the Court could go into those technicalities, it had, however, to decide first whether the Sunni Waqf Board's plaint was not time-barred. It was filed five days before twelve years after the Hindu take-over. Now, for suits of declaration, a limit of six years is prescribed, but for suits of possession, the limit is twelve years. But it must be more complicated than that, because at the time of writing, the matter has still not been decided. The decision had been announced for October 31, 1990, but it was once more postponed.

Meanwhile, there are doubts about how independently the judiciary apparatus can still function in the present circumstances. When justice K.M. Pandey ordered the locks removed from the Mandir gate, on February 1, 1986, many secularists said that this was a Congress-sponsored quid pro quo with the Hindus in return for the infamous Muslim Women's Bill.²⁹ That is of course a very serious allegation against the judge. What did happen, is that the Congress government first asked the VHP to file a petition to get the locks removed. When the VHP refused, the Congress moved one of its own people to file the petition, which was granted by the judge. This did not require any bribing or otherwise influencing of the judge : the argumentation of the petition was such that a positive Court ruling was virtually assured.

Shortly before the Kar Seva, the same judge was refused a promotion by the Union law minister at the insistence of U.P. chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, against the advice of the senior judges, which is normally followed. Mulayam, in the middle of his propaganda and military build-up to prevent the Kar Seva programme, justified his veto on the ground that justice Pandey is *a communalist*.

Lawyers and judges have protested against this interference. If a judge can be punished by the executive power for the contents of his Court rulings, then that is an intolerable breach of the separation of the legislative, executive and judiciary powers, one of the cornerstones of a modern democratic polity. The secularists, champions of modernity against obscurantism, have in this case condoned this Ancien Regime practice by their silence. They have not stood up to remind Mulayam that, according to their own earlier opinion, justice K.M. Pandey had only acted on government orders.

In January 1991, when Mulayam and the central government had become critically dependent on Congress support, and Congress did its best to placate the Hindu electorate as much as possible, justice K.M. Pandey was given his promotion after all.^{[30](#)}

The essence of the Muslim position in the judicial debate has been that the de facto ownership since 1528 creates a title, no matter whether the acquisition then was legitimate or not. However, this title by accustomed possession only counts if the de facto possession went unchallenged. If the victimized party continues to claim its stolen property, even if the existing power equations don't permit restoring it, then de facto possession does not create a valid title. And it is well-attested that the Hindus kept on claiming the site as much as the situation permitted. So, even if the matter is treated as purely a title suit over some real estate, the Hindus do have a leg to stand on when they claim the Ram Janmabhoomi site.

But of course, this dispute is not really an ordinary title suit.

4.2 Disputed competence of the judiciary

The more fundamental question in the debate on the juridical dimension of the Ayodhya, is whether the issues involved can at all be adjudicated by a law court charged with checking legality in terms of the laws of the Indian Republic founded in 1947 and endowed with a Constitution in 1950. The VHP has rejected the authority of the Courts in this matter. The Babri Masjid groups have opposed this stand and demanded that the VHP abide by the Court verdict. But in October 1990, Imam Bukhari of the BMAC has also declared that if the court ruling goes against the Muslim demands, then he will not accept it, and an agitation against the verdict will be launched.^{[31](#)}

Of course, the VHP have a point when they argue that their opponents are in no position to lecture them about abiding by Court verdicts. First of all, there are a number of articles in the Constitution which are not being implemented, and of which the implementation is not even actively demanded (often opposed) by the secularist parties and critics. Among them:

1. Article 15, prohibiting discrimination, which is effectively thwarted by the separate religion-based civil codes, and by the almost unbridled imposition of reservations in recruitment for government jobs; moreover, this Article is violated by Article 30, which gives to minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice, but forgets to grant the majority the same right - unique in world history; it is also violated by Article 370, giving a special status to Kashmir and effectively giving a number of privileges to Kashmiris denied to other citizens.
2. Article 44 mandates the establishment of a common civil code, which Muslim organizations refuse (they demand the scrapping of this Article), and which went out of reach for a long time when the Congress government gave in to the Muslim demand to overrule a Supreme Court verdict and enforce Shariat rulings on divorcee maintenance through legislation.
3. Article 48 wants the state to enact prohibition of cowslaughter; Kerala, West Bengal and Nagaland have not passed any such act, and in several other states the act is openly violated ; India is in fact a beef-exporter.^{[32](#)}

Coming to the issue of abiding by court verdicts, we find the record of the parties other than the *Hindu communalists* has not been all that impeccable. Some examples :

1. Beru Bari was a district bordering on East Pakistan, awarded by Radcliffe to India. When Pakistan minister Liaqat Ali wanted it, Nehru obliged. The Supreme Court struck down the agreement, but Nehru made his captive parliament overrule the verdict, and ceded the territory.
2. Similarly, the Supreme Court verdict in the well-known Shah Bano case was overruled by a law, in order to appease Muslim fundamentalist agitation.
3. When Indira Gandhi was convicted for using unfair means in the elections, she organized demonstrations in which the mob clamoured for physical action against the judge, and she shouted: "*These are my people and my judges*".
4. V.P. Singh, champion of *value-based politics*, faced with the possibility of the Supreme Court striking down the implementation of the Mandal report, declared that he would have it implemented anyway.
5. When some leftists demanded a ban on the Shilanyas ceremony in Ayodhya, and on the Ram Shila processions, the Supreme Court dismissed the demand, arguing that these activities are but an exercise of the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, and that even the threat of riots does not nullify constitutional rights, since it is the duty of the governments to protect the exercise of constitutional freedoms against such threats of violence. Nevertheless, the secularist/Stalinist intelligentsia has been shouting scandal that the government did not ban the Shilanyas and the processions, and has been deflecting attention from the Supreme Court's upholding the constitutional rights which Hindus also have. In their comments afterwards, they have kept on attacking Rajiv Gandhi for not committing contempt of Court by taking the unconstitutional step of proclaiming a ban (the sweetest thing for a Stalinist mind) on the Shilanyas.
6. A petition to ban Mr. Advani's rathayatra from Somnath to Ayodhya was dismissed, since there was nothing illegal about it, Yet the secularists have kept on demanding the ban, and finally Laloo Prasad Yadav, chief

minister of Bihar, has ignored the judicial decision and arrested mr. Advani.

7. In spite of a High Court ruling upholding the pilgrims' right to have a Parikrama around Ayodhya, even in the heat of Kar Seva, the U.P. chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav has effectively made it impossible. Moreover, he had the canopy over the Shilanyas spot removed against Court orders to preserve the status- quo.³³ A Human Rights Society team released a report on December 14 in Delhi, in which it contended that the U.P. government had violated the Allahabad High Court orders by effectively preventing the Parikrama. This constituted an encroachment on the Hindus' religious rights.³⁴

So, if the VHP wants to disregard a judicial ruling on Ayodhya, it is in more or less good company. But then there is still a difference. While the above-mentioned secularists have disregarded or violated Court orders without disputing the competence of the Court in the matter concerned, the VHP disputes that any Court can have any authority in this matter.

On December 18, when it seemed that the government was willing to let the decision depend upon the archaeological evidence, which went in favour of the Hindu claim, a Hindu religious leader still insisted that no consideration except the Hindu belief should count. Sri Sugunendra Thirtha Swami of Puthige Math (Udupi) declared that "*archaeological proof should not clinch the Ram temple issue*".³⁵ After all, suppose Babar had been more careful and removed every trace of the temple he demolished: then the Hindus' position would remain equally justified, yet the archaeological evidence would not be taken as going in their favour. So, the Hindu belief alone should suffice as a ground for leaving the place to the Hindus.

The demand to put this item of belief above the authority of the courts, is in my opinion not so much a display of principled non-secularism, as rather a display of mistrust in the Indian state. Hindus expect the state not to respect Hindu beliefs and Hindu sacred places. They know that, ever since Indira's favouring *committed judges*, the judiciary is also not what it used to be. They expect that the state will consider other things more sacred and important than the Hindu sacred places : among them, the Muslim title to

the site, acquired through force by the invader Babar, and never annulled by the British colonizer.

However, formally the VHP's and the abovementioned Swami's stand is non-secular. It does not want to submit a decision to the secular authorities. Yet, a piece of land being A's rather than B's property is a secular matter, isn't it?

Well, that is precisely the point. In the Hindu view, the piece of land is sacred. It is the deity's property.³⁶ Decisions concerning it are therefore decisions with a religious dimension. Now, as secularism means a divorce of state and religion, the state should not interfere with religious affairs. I am not sure this would be convincing to a secularist, but it certainly has logic.

Some of the Babri Masjid advocates, notably Syed Shahabuddin, have said that a Masjid is Allah's property, but that Allah doesn't want it, and doesn't answer prayers offered in it, if it was built on disputed land. Of course, Islamic Scripture has never had any objection to building mosques on sites *disputed* by Kafirs ; but if mr. Shahabuddin wants to play the *tolerant Islam* game, we should join him and compel him to be consistent (instead of the tactical changes of position he and other Babri advocates have been making). So, Allah doesn't want the Babri Masjid, which has irrefutably been built on a site stolen from the Hindus. With Allah's help, this non-secular approach to the dispute yields an unambiguous solution and relieves the secular judges of an unpleasant case.

Chapter 5. Ram Janmabhoomi Politics

5.1 V.P. Singh and Ayodhya

The centuries-old struggle over the **Babri Masjid - Ram Janmabhoomi** came in a critical phase on November 9, 1989, when the first stone of the Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir was laid, in a grand Shilanyas ceremony. The astrologers who had chosen the time, had clearly picked a very auspicious stellar configuration, for on the very same day, the Berlin wall was broken. Jay Dubashi wrote : *"While a temple was going up in Ayodhya, a Communist temple was being demolished five thousand miles away in Europe"* If this is not history, I don't know what is.^{[37](#)}

The actual construction had been announced for February, but then the VHP leadership decided to give the new prime minister V.P. Singh, who at that time enjoyed a lot of goodwill, four months time to work out an amicable agreement among all the parties concerned. During those four months nothing was done. At least, that is the impression among the public. Later, one of V.P. Singh's aides was to come out in defense of his boss saying that a lot of consultations had taken place, but that a compromise was just not possible. And it is true : no compromise is possible between the demands of the Vishva Hindu Parishad and those of the Babri Masjid Action Committee and the Babri Masjid Movement Co-ordination Committee.

In July 1990, well after the four months' grace period had elapsed, the VHP announced it would start temple construction on October 30.

On August 7, V.P.Singh announced that his government was going to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission Report, giving 27% reservations in government jobs to the so-called Other Backward Classes (i.e. Castes). It was a surprise move, for which he had not even

consulted his allies, the BJP and the Communist parties. The move was calculated to divide all other non-caste-based parties along caste lines, to attract the massive OBC vote bank (and prevent it from being *hijacked* by legitimate OBC leader Devi Lal), and last but not least, to divide the Ram Janmabhoomi movement.

Prime Minister V.P. Singh really did seek a compromise solution for the Ayodhya dilemma. Behind the screen, he had worked out an arrangement on October 15 to 18, which was divulged only after it had fallen through, by Arun Shourie³⁸. The plan was that the disputed area would be acquired by the government. For further decision, it would be divided in the structure itself and the adjoining land including the Shilanyas site. The structure itself would be referred to the Supreme Court for determining its character. On the adjoining land, the VHP would be allowed to start building the Mandir. Since part of the land was private property, it could only be acquired through the **Land Acquisition Act** procedure, which would take at least three weeks even in an emergency formula. However, it could be acquired immediately under a special Ordinance.

On October 19, by 3 p.m., the formula was agreed upon by several ministers and leaders of the BJP, VHP, RSS. Then, V.P. Singh had a meeting with the Muslim leaders. So, at 5 p.m. he told his aides he had changed his mind : all the land considered disputed before the Allahabad High Court would be referred to the Supreme Court, and there was no question of handing over the Shilanyas area to the VHP. His law officer explained to him that once the government has acquired the land, all disputes about the land titles would end, so no further decision on the land surrounding the structure itself was needed. Nevertheless, that night the Ordinance came, without anything of the distinction between the structure and the surrounding land, which the prime minister himself had worked out and agreed upon with the VHP leaders.

The VHP felt it had been taken for a ride, and was furious. Nevertheless, the land had been acquired, so perhaps it was a very small step in the right direction (that is what L.K. Advani had to say about it). But the Muslim leaders, whom the prime minister had already tried to appease with his unilateral change in the Ordinance, were not appeased enough. That's the

way it goes with appeasement policies : the concession made is never the final concession. By October 21, they realized that this acquisition of property claimed as Waqf property could be a precedent for more such take-overs, and they didn't want to take any chances. So they called on the prime minister. What happened there behind closed doors can be deduced from the outcome: the Ordinance, issued in the name of the President of India, was withdrawn.

Arun Shourie has made the point that V.P. Singh gave in twice to the pressure from such secularists as Imam Bukhari, when they threatened V.P. Singh with the prospect of the Muslim vote bank deserting him the way it had deserted Rajiv Gandhi in 1989.

One might also wonder if this agreement between the government and the BJP/VHP, which must have been in preparation for some time, has not also influenced the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign. Could it be that when in September, the BJP threw its full weight behind the VHP campaign, and to an extent even took it over, it acted on the understanding that the government would allow the start of the temple construction from the Shilanyas site?

At any rate, this is the story of one of the most impressive episodes in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. BJP president L.K. Advani set out on a Rathyatra from Somnath to Ayodhya, where he would join in the Kar Seva, the actual bricklaying of the temple, on October 30. The trip took him through Gujarat, Maharashtra, a tip of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi. Everywhere the popular response was massive and enthusiastic. No riots took place. In some places, caste riots that had been triggered by the Mandal plan, subsided. It seems that when Hindus utter the name Rama, they forget their differences.

From Delhi, Advani took the train to Bihar, and resumed his Rathyatra. Even in the sensitive tribal belt, the response was enthusiastic and not tainted by riots. But as Advani came nearer to the Uttar Pradesh border, the political fever was rising. Mulayam Singh Yadav, chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, had announced he would arrest Mr. Advani as soon as he would enter the state. At the same time, behind the scene, he was challenging prime minister V.P. Singh to intervene. The latter finally obliged, via his

political friend Laloo Prasad Yadav (Mulayam, while still a fellow partyman, was fast turning into a political enemy), the chief minister of Bihar. In the early morning of October 22, i.e. after the Ordinance plan had fallen through, L.K. Advani was arrested.

The BJP reaction was prompt. The party wrote to president Venkataraman that it withdrew its support from V.P. Singh's minority government. It also announced an all-India strike (Bharat bandh) on October 24.

With the fall of the government now a certainty, the ruling Janata Dal fell apart. Dissidents led by Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal, soon joined by Mulayam Singh Yadav, formed the Janata Dal (Socialist). V.P. Singh insisted on proving his majority in the Lok Sabha, on November 7, knowing that only a rump of some 90 Janata Dal MPs plus the Communists would support him. Chandra Shekhar started working out an arrangement for a JD(S) minority government supported by the Congress-I. For the first time, a government had to step down for its anti- Hindu policy.

5.2 Mulayam's Emergency rule and Kar Seva

Meanwhile in Uttar Pradesh, chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav was playing it rough. He pre-emptively arrested all leaders of organizations involved in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. In order to prevent Kar Sevaks from going to Ayodhya, he suspended all public transport in the state, blocked roads, and imposed curfew in a number of cities. House-to-house searches for hiding Kar Sevaks were carried out, the borders were sealed, and massive numbers of Hindus (as well as a number of Muslim Kar Sevaks) were jailed. The numbers cited vary between one and eight lakhs, which is a lot more than during the Emergency or the Quit India movement in the whole country.

On October 30, when according to Mulayam's boast, no bird would be able to fly into Ayodhya, thousands of Kar Sevaks broke through the police defenses thanks to their sheer numbers (not through force of arms : hardly any policeman got hurt). A gate was actually opened by policemen, who

later justified this action by saying it was the lesser evil in the circumstances, otherwise many people would have been killed.

Some Kar Sevaks climbed the domes and planted saffron flags there. The structure got damaged a little bit, far less than what the crowd could have done if it had really wanted to demolish it. Gradually, the police forces regained control and drove the Kar Sevaks out, arresting many, and killing about 10, others cite figures from 5 to 50.

On November 2, the Kar Sevaks came back. As they were sitting or standing in the narrow lanes near the Janmabhoomi site (secularists say they were slowly moving towards it), the police opened fire. According to press reports, it skipped the normal procedure of first warning, lathi-charge and teargas, shooting in the air, and ultimately shooting at the legs. Most of the dead bodies had bullet wounds in the head and chest. Well, hitting the legs without hitting the heads may have been difficult as the security forces were shooting from the rooftops.

The death toll is a matter of dispute, as many of the bodies have been carried off in Army vans, and unceremoniously disposed of in an unknown place. The papers said 9, or 17, or 25 at most. The Chief Minister said 16, and stuck to it. The official Home Ministry figures³⁹ for the communal violence in 1990 mention 45 as the total death toll in Ayodhya, which implies that less than 30 got killed on November 2. But many local people, including eyewitnesses, say that several thousands have been killed. The BJP appealed to the president to depose Mulayam, and cited the figure of 168 people killed. Some days after, the VHP claimed it could substantiate a death toll of about 400, or as many as were killed by general Dyer at Jallianwala Bagh.

It has been briefly mentioned in a few press reports that some of the bullets found in dead or wounded Kar Sevaks' bodies, were not of the kind the security forces normally use. Some people infer from this, that Mulayam or someone else who has a say in the deployment of the security personnel, had allowed *minority* snipers to take up positions and join in the shooting. It sounds a bit fantastic, but given the high criminalization of politics especially in Bihar and U.P., it is not entirely impossible. Then again, it is hard to imagine that legitimate security men would accept it and

that none of them would have leaked out the precise facts, which we would have heard by now.

The prevalent explanation for the merciless shooting, is that the security men wanted (or had been told) to make up for their weak performance on October 30. That is not entirely convincing. It certainly does not explain why the prescribed steps before an actual shooting were not gone through. One can understand the police immediately resorting to shooting when it is attacked. But here, no-one has claimed that the Kar Sevaks were attacking the police and threatening their lives.

Could it be that the security men had received orders to be purposely ruthless, as a show of strength on the part of the Chief Minister ? Many Muslims seem to have appreciated his tough stand. Communist Chief Minister of West Bengal, Jyoti Basu, had insisted that he be tough and unflinching. As Jay Dubashi has observed, with a Communist Chief Minister, not hundreds but thousands would have been shot.

At any rate, the Chief Minister would regret his ruthlessness. He became overnight the most hated man in Hindu India. With the split in the Janata Dal, he had to seek Congress support. The Congress, feeling it was massively losing popularity because of its non-opposition and now even support to Mulayam, started to put pressure on Mulayam to tone down his anti-Mandir stand, and to make goodwill gestures towards the Hindus. Even after a month of climbing down, Mulayam was still too controversial for Congress, and Rajiv Gandhi expressed the desire that Mulayam step down. Only because the Congress party was divided on the issue and very afraid of elections, could Mulayam stay on.

The general change of atmosphere made Mulayam suggests that a Mandir be built by the government, starting from the shilanyas site, but in such a direction as not to come in the way of the Masjid. That the Hindu claim was justified, even anti-Hindu politicians had come to concede.⁴⁰ The question for them became: how, where and by whom can the temple be built without really antagonizing the Muslim ?

Rajiv Gandhi wrote a letter to brandnew prime minister Chandra Shekhar, to suggest that the historical and archaeological evidence on

whether the Masjid had indeed replaced a Mandir, be considered as a decisive element in the Ayodhya solution. In practical terms : if experts agree that a Mandir had been destroyed to make way for the Masjid, then the government should treat the disputed site as a Hindu site. Still vague enough, and yet a remarkable departure from the earlier anti-historical position that the courts should decide (which meant that the issue had to be treated as purely an ownership dispute).

The government then invited the AIBMAC and the VHP to come forward and present the evidence for their respective cases. On December 23, the VHP submitted a carefully prepared argumentation full of exact references to authentic material, with 28 annexures. The AIBMAC submitted nothing but a pile of documents, with no explanation of how it proved what. Most of these documents were just recent newspaper clippings, statements of opinion by non-experts and outright cranks, and Court documents concerning legal disputes emanating from the situation created by force in 1528, totally irrelevant to the question what was on the site before the Masjid was built.

On January 6, both sides submitted rejoinders to the other party's evidence. At least, that was what had been asked of them, but only the VHP had done so, The AIBMAC had nothing to offer but an even bulkier pile of documents without any proof value whatsoever. Since the AIBMAC had not even challenged the VHP documents with a formal rebuttal, the objective position was that it conceded the validity of the VHP evidence. Both the press and the Babri activists, who till a month before had been decrying the VHP's "suppression of history in favour of myth" etc., now started downplaying the importance of the historical evidence. As N. Kunju put it : "*History obscures, not clarifies.*"^{[41](#)}

Syed Shahabuddin, conveyor of BMMCC, declared that regardless of the evidence, the title suit had to be decided as such by the Allahabad High Court, even if the government would ask the Supreme Court for its opinion on the historical evidence. Apart from an admission of weakness on the historical evidence front, Shahabuddin's demand was just tactics : the more forums deliberating on the issue, the more chance that one of them would go against the Hindu demand ; and if all of them go against the Muslim

position, the Committees can always launch an *agitation*, as in the Shah Bano case. He also said he would not allow the rival AIBMAC to concede the Masjid. The AIBMAC itself declared that it would only concede the Masjid if proof was offered that Ram was born on that exact site.

Short, faced with the evidence that the Masjid had indeed forcibly replaced a Mandir, they just raised their demands and made it clear that this evidence talk was for them just a tactical device to keep the Hindus busy with everything except building the new Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir. But at least they had effectively conceded what everybody had known all along : that the Babri Masjid was one of the thousands of mosques built on destroyed Pagan temples.

With the scholarly contest about the historical evidence yielding only a firm historical conclusion, but not the concomitant political consensus to leave this Hindu sacred site to the Hindus, the matter was again down to its bare essentials : a power struggle.

On the ground, the VHP had taken to softer tactics. After the killing on November 2, in which many sadhus had also died, the feeling among at least the non-VHP leaders of the movement in Ayodhya itself, was to tread slowly and to avoid more of this mass martyrdom. Hinduism has no cult of martyrdom (to avoid the Islamic term shaheed, the Sanskrit word hutatma, "sacrificed self", was used), and prefers to advance without this waste of human lives.

There were rumours that the Bajrang Dal had prepared a *hit list* of culprits for the massacre, who would have to be punished (after the Khalistani example). The rumour apparently sprung from a pamphlet in which the officers directly responsible for the massacre were mentioned by name. But it turned out that no police officers with those names existed. This ridiculous pamphlet incidentally does show to what a miserably low level even a movement for a just cause can stoop. The propensity to indulge in silly and reprehensible rumours is of course encouraged by the stress on emotionalism (quite different from the normal Hindu cool) and the lack of factual information and ideological education of which the Ram Janmabhoomi movement has suffered on some occasions.

Anyway, I have asked Vinay katiyar, Bajrang Dal leader, what the truth was of this *hit list* story : did activist Hindus think that a need for armed struggle had arisen ? He told me : **Where is the need for hit lists, for revenge ? Mulayam will be boycotted by the people. We have the people on our side. It is only when you cannot count on the support of the people, that you have to take to assassinations. So, let them live, let them feel the anger of the people. We have no intention of turning murderers into martyrs.**⁴²

Some days after the massacre, the Hindu leadership in Ayodhya decided to organize a Satyagraha, with one thousand people courting arrest every day, from December 6 till January 15. But, as more people than one thousand per day volunteered to participate, the total number of people who courted arrest in those forty days was over two lakhs.

Meanwhile, on the political front the wind was turning. In different quarters, the mood was increasingly in favour of hijacking the Janmabhoomi movement rather than suppressing it. Alright, let the Mandir be built, but let us build it and take the credit. The Kar Seva campaign's material success on the ground might have been limited, but that change in the mental atmosphere would be decisive for the further development of the issue. No matter who would lay the actual bricks of the Ram Mandir, the credit for that change of mood in favour of the Mandir certainly goes to the Ram Bhaktas who were there in Ayodhya in the autumn of 1990.

5.3 Reactions in neighbouring countries

In November 1989, Muslims in Bangla Desh destroyed more than 200 Hindu temples, on the pretext of reacting against the Shilanyas in Ayodhya. The government agreed to pay for the repairs of 10 of them. I have no information on how much it has paid already. Moreover, during this anti-Hindu violence, many women were raped, some people killed and many wounded, and many shops looted and burned down.

In November 1990, another forty or fifty temples were razed or burnt down in Bangla Desh. Or at least, those are the figures given by the

secularist press. The Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad, the Bangla minorities' association, reported that in the a village in Chittagong district more than fifty Hindu women had been raped, two killed, and that hundreds of temples had been damaged or burnt down.

Both the opposition parties and the Hindu-Buddhist- Christian Unity Council of Bangla Desh have alleged a strong government involvement in the communal violence. They pinpointed ministers and leaders of the ruling party as having instigated the communal violence. More : "*We directly blame the president for these heinous anti-human incidents... they were staged in a planned way under a blueprint in co-operation with law-enforcing agencies.*"⁴³

But the government indulged in the same anti-communal rhetoric as the Indian governments usually do : president Ershad declared that "*the glorious tradition of communal harmony would be preserved at all costs and trouble- makers indulging in anti-social activities would be dealt with severely.*"⁴⁴ And it even got praise from the Indian secularists : "*President Ershad acted firmly in handling the riots... The fact that Hindus were free to organize a protest march shows that the government had placed no curbs on such demonstrations.*"⁴⁵ I think it shows in the first place that Hindus had reason to protest.

You see, the secularists are like the followers of Big Brother in George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four (a parody of Stalinism). When Big Brother has raised the prices, they hold a demonstration to thank him for lowering the prices. And when a Muslim government organizes pogroms against the Hindus, the secularists thank it for keeping communal harmony.

But Bangla Desh has not returned the compliment. On the contrary. General Ershad gave speeches attacking "*a neighbouring country*" for "*hatching a conspiracy*" and "*inspiring destructive activities*" etc. So far, no problem. But his deputy prime minister, Shah Moazzem "*went a step further, questioning the identity, religion and citizenship of the people behind the disturbances [in opposition anti-government strikes]... Giving a call for resisting the designs of **a neighbouring country**, Shah Moazzem almost incited communal violence by calling upon people to identify the*

particular community, which, he said, is very easy."⁴⁶ Meanwhile, "the opposition parties, the United Minority Council and independent groups of lawyers, professionals and teachers have accused the government of organizing communal violence last month to distract the ongoing opposition movement".

In Pakistan too, Muslims used the Ayodhya news as an occasion for temple-burning, rape, murder, and looting. The Indian secularist papers highlighted the Pak army intervention in Quetta (Baluchistan), in which two Muslim rioters were shot dead. However, in Dera Murad Jamali, *"the police was unable to control the mob"*, which ransacked fifteen shops belonging to Hindus and set a temple on fire. Little was said about the large-scale outbursts in Sindh. In Latifabad and Hyderabad, at least three temples were destroyed, in neighbouring Siroghat the Rama Pir temple was looted and set on fire, etc. Islamic student organizations also took the occasion to attack a Christian school and church in Peshawar.

Of course, Pakistan didn't take this as an occasion for being criticized (in fact, official India has only reacted to the Pak interference, but, as always, it has failed to criticize the persecution of Hindus). Rather, it was on the offensive, constantly feeding its citizens gory stories of a mosque being demolished and Muslims being oppressed by India's Hindu government. So Pakistan lectured India about human rights, religious freedom, secularism. The Senate Committee on Religious and Minority Affairs *took serious note of the desecration of the Babri Masjid in India*, and referred to the Liaquat-Nehru pact, which promised safeguards to the minorities in both India and Pakistan. Adds commentator Aabha Dixit : *"The committee, however, maintained a deafening silence on the need for Islamabad to fulfill its part of the obligation."*⁴⁷

To the credit of the secularist People's Union for Civil Liberties, it must be said that they have protested against Pak interference : *"The Pakistani leaders must clearly understand that theirs is a theocratic state where religious and other minorities are denied fundamental freedoms including the freedom to worship..."*⁴⁸

In Nepal, the Hindu kingdom, some five Hindu temples were burnt down by Muslim gangs, who had probably come over from Bihar. No official protests from any side have been reported.

Some secularists have made a confession : "*The trouble, both in Bangladesh and in Pakistan, might have been averted if the media had not played up the Ayodhya incidents in highly provocative and exaggerated tones.*"⁴⁹

Not that journalists have suddenly become modest and self-critical : these Indian journalist are just blaming their Pak and Bangla colleagues. However, it is they themselves who are most to blame for precisely those undeontological practices they mention. They themselves have highly provoked Muslims into action by telling them that *a mosque* (in fact mosque architecture functioning as a Hindu temple) was about to be *demolished* (relocated, was the BJP/VHP plan). And they themselves have exaggerated, to say the least, by describing the Hindus as *extremists* and even *fascists*, who systematically start riots against the wretched Indian Muslims. The disinformation on which the Pakistani Muslims have acted, was not only there in their own papers, but just as much in the Times of India or the Illustrated Weekly of India.

The following is quoted as an example of distorted reporting in Pak papers : **A wave of anti-Muslim riots has engulfed all corners of India these days and more than 50 cities are under curfew. Despite this, however, Muslims are being killed mercilessly...**⁵⁰ In India, this is something of a standard secularist column phrase on riots (see [ch.11](#)). And Aabha Dixit adds a comment on Pak reporting : **The headlines only refer to the desecration of the Babri mosque. There is never a mention of the Hindus who fall to police bullets.** Replace headlines with editorials, and this describes the situation in Indian secularist papers.

It is not only the papers who have broadcast lies about Ayodhya. They were hand in glove with the secularist political establishment. As V.K. Malhotra, BJP national secretary, remarked : "*The responsibility for what has happened in Pakistan and Bangla Desh is entirely that of the Union and*

U.P. governments. They have been making so much anti-Hindu propaganda on this issue that those countries are getting all the excuse for this."[51](#)

Incidentally, for those who believe in SAARC and in Indo- Pak friendship, it may be interesting to hear the comment of Abdul Qayyum Khan, the *president* of Pak-occupied Kashmir. He said the controversy was "*paying the way for a movement [in India] for an independent and liberated Islamic country within India*".[52](#)

Chapter 6. Communalists and Their Communities

6.1 Hindu Society

In many press reports, it has been said that the Ayodhya conflict is a conflict between *the Hindus* and *the Muslims*. Upon closer inspection, that may not be entirely accurate.

JNU historian Bipan Chandra has often stated that the religious community is really a fictional entity which in people's consciousness only blurs the real-life categories like socio-economical class. The sense of being a member of a religious community such as *the Hindus* or *the Muslims* is merely *false consciousness*, fostered by leaders who want to use the masses for their own social and political ambitions. While I do not subscribe to this Marxist view, I do recognize that in many cases the claim of *communal* leaders of being their entire community's mouthpiece, is false.

Thus, it is very doubtful that the agitation against the 1985 Supreme Court ruling in the Shah Bano case, i.e. against a Muslim divorcee's right to alimony, was an expression of the wishes of the 50% women in the Muslim community. And the Congress government's decision to give in to this agitation was reprehensible not only for being a case of *minority appeasement*, but also for treating the vocal group of fanatical Muslims as the real representatives of the Muslim community, and ignoring the countercurrent of women's organizations and intellectuals (including cabinet minister Mohammed Arif Khan).

So in the Ayodhya case, to what extent can we say that the agitation on both sides is supported by the communities concerned?

On the Hindu side, I find it striking how almost every person I questioned, has shed all shame of expressing his support for the Ram Janmabhoomi cause. Many people who in 1989, when questioned by this

foreigner, still took care not to sound too involved (by calling it a false problem, a creation of the politicians, or by adding to their basic support to the cause a criticism of the VHP people etc.), now simply say : "*Well, I am a Hindu. Of course I think the Mandir should be built.*" The shooting of several hundreds of Kar Sevaks on November 2 has of course radicalized many half-hearted supporters.

Most of the people who panic about *secularism in danger* and write grim articles against the Janmabhoomi campaign, are only Hindus in name. Many of them are practicing communists, and most of them belong to the Western- educated elite who are convinced that Hinduism is India's biggest problem. They are still a rather small minority among the Hindus. What is harder to assess, is how many "*Backward*" Hindus, who have supported V.P. Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav in their championing of the Backward Caste cause and the Mandal Report implementation, at heart supported these leaders on the Ayodhya issue. Most of my contacts with Indians have been in an urban setting, so my impression about the rural public opinion is not first-hand. But for what it is worth, I share the opinion of some journalists that many rural people who support the Mandir, would vote for Mulayam or V.P. Singh anyway, because of their stand on Mandal; which conversely means that the electoral support by Backward Hindus for the Janata Dal should by no means be taken as a head count of anti-Mandir opinion.

If both the Janata Dal (S) and Congress were so afraid of elections after V.P. Singh's fall, it was because they knew that this time many people were going to vote for the Mandir party, and against the undecided and Masjid parties. Even after some papers reported that many villagers who declared they would vote for either Janata Dal because they wanted the Mandal recommendations to be implemented, even though they were just as much in favour of the building of the Mandir, the *secularist* parties did not want to take chances.

The support base for the Mandir is larger than the BJP electorate. It is a fact that Advani's Rathayatra brought out far more people than Mulayam's rallies for secularism, even when all the communist and Muslim fundamentalist organizations systematically attended the latter, and even

while the state machinery had been used to mobilize for them. There is simply no honest doubt that the Ram Janmabhoomi movement had become a genuine mass movement, the biggest in Indian history, and not just an artificial creation for the BJP's political gain.

The reason why most of the common Hindus could be mobilized for the Ram Janmabhoomi cause, is not that the Hindus have become so fanatical. On the contrary, it is because they perceive that the building of the Mandir and the relocating of the existing structure is a very reasonable and justifiable project. They all know that Muslim rulers have brought immense suffering over the Hindu population for destroyed, no fanatic needs to tell them that. And they have heard that the disputed place is in use as a temple since 1949, that it is functionally not a mosque at all, so the rule that any other community's place of worship should be respected just doesn't apply. They do not see why anyone should object to their replacing the existing structure with proper Hindu temple architecture. They consider it an entirely internal affair of the Hindu community, and they perceive the attempts to stop them as yet another aggression against Hinduism by its enemies.

6.2 The Muslim community

On the Muslim side, the picture is less solid. And it is less solid, because it does indeed take fanaticism to uphold the Babri Masjid cause. The Muslim leaders' position is, in effect, that Hindus cannot take back any of the thousands of places of worship that have been stolen from them, but that they themselves can take possession of a flourishing Hindu temple, standing on a spot which the Hindus consider sacred, simply because it has been a mosque more than fifty years ago. The common Muslim, even if not informed about all the details of the matter, senses that this position is not equitable. That is why many ordinary people in the Muslim community are quite ready to leave the disputed site entirely to the Hindus, in exchange for more communal peace and a guarantee that no functioning mosques will be demanded for take-over by the Hindus.

The most outspoken defender of Muslim agreement to the building of a new Mandir on the disputed site and shifting of the Babri structure, has been Indian Muslim Youth Conference president Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi. He declared : *"It is the duty of every nationalist Indian to protect the birthplace of Lord Rama to save India's honour, prestige and cultural heritage.... Anti-national and communal activities of Muslim fundamentalists are a blot on the entire community... It is the duty of all nationalist Muslims to expose such designs and accept the truth."*⁵³

He led a number of his organization's members into participation in the kar Seva, and some of them even into Mulayam's jails. It is also reported that two journalists, S.A. Naqvi and Tanveer Haider Usmani, president and vice-president of the Kanpur Press Club, *"were arrested here today, together with some other Muslims, when they were going to Ayodhya for the proposed Kar Seva"*.⁵⁴ In this category are also the numerous Muslims belonging to the BJP and even to the Shiv Sena, including Mr. Advani's chauffeur during the Rathayatra, and BJP-leader Sikander Bakht, who flagged off the Rathayatra at the Somnath temple.

But there are also many anonymous Muslims, some of whom I talked to in teastalls or on trains, who are, in different degrees, willing to make the asked-for concession to the Hindu attachment to the disputed site. And some Muslims write to the papers to express what they think of it. Mr. M.N.H. Siddiqui from Lucknow proposes that *"Muslims themselves should shift the mosque... Ram temple should be constructed in that place and Muslims should volunteer to contribute something to it as a gesture of goodwill... Amendment be made in the Constitution to the effect that the status quo of 1947 be maintained..."*⁵⁵

Abdul Mooin from Lucknow writes : *"All Muslims agree that namaz cannot be offered if the mosque is built on disputed land or by demolishing the temple... What is the harm if the mosque is shifted brick by brick to some other place? For a building can be shifted but not a birth place... We should agree to shift the mosque to some other place and thereby maintain peace and brotherhood in our country and show the world our secular credentials."*⁵⁶

Ahmed Zakaria is quoted by Farzana Versey as saying : *"There is absolutely no question of our identity being submerged. The Babri Masjid committee does not represent all Muslims. How can two or three people decide ?"* And Farzana Versey, apparently summing up mr. Zakaria's opinion, adds : *"The issue is not the mosque. Most Muslims would not mind giving it away, but what after that ?"*⁵⁷ There is some apprehension that a concession will be a sign of weakness and will make the Hindus more aggressive. But the acceptance of the Hindu character of the disputed site is in itself not deemed unreasonable.

Replying to another letter-writer, mr. Azhar Ahmed Ansari from Meerut writes : *"He is mistaken in believing that the Muslim minority values the existing structure in Ayodhya. The fact is that the Muslim masses set no store by this dilapidated edifice since its utility as a mosque is extremely doubtful with the presence of numerous idols... Although most of the icons are mutilated, they nevertheless remain what they are : an anathema to Islamic theology, ruling out namaz in their presence. The Muslim masses have begun to understand this situation as also the fact that no namaz has been offered here in the memory of any living person. As many as 18 Muslims hailing from Ayodhya and Faizabad have submitted an affidavit before the High Court bench hearing the Ram Janmabhoomi case, that the Babri Masjid is of no use to the followers of Islam since it contains icons."*⁵⁸

Mr. Rafat Sayeed does not like to be pressured into handing over mosques, but *"as the mosque has been made out to be a symbol of an unpleasant past and humiliation, as Abu Nadeem suggests, let an exception be made and the masjid shifted and rebuilt in an orderly manner under expert guidance."*⁵⁹

Mr. Shad Kidwai advises his fellow Muslim : *"I Invite all thinking Muslims to gift the Ayodhya mosque to the Hindus... Our magnanimity at this critical juncture will usher in an era of understanding and will, I am convinced, evoke an equally warm response from all thinking Hindus. But Muslims should justifiably demand a constitutional guarantee that the nature of all religious places as on August 15, 1947, will not be allowed to*

be altered."⁶⁰ A similar proposal has been made by Rasheed Talib⁶¹, which seems to have earned him the wrath of some Muslim leaders.⁶²

And finally, there is none other than Asghar Ali Engineer, who has written : "*The Muslims, in my opinion, should show magnanimity and [make] a noble gesture of gifting away the mosque...*"⁶³

The proposals made by these Muslims are not far removed from the one made by L.K. Advani on 13 August 1990.⁶⁴ He suggested that Muslims leave the site to the Hindus, and promised that in return he would persuade the VHP leadership to even renounce its demand for the hand-over of the disputed sites in Mathura and Varanasi. Advani's own supporters were not too happy with his proposals. One of them said : "*You are saying to the Muslims: give us Ayodhya and then you can take the rest of India.*" The VHP later declared that it could not agree to this give away of two sacred places, and BJP leader Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia said that mr. Advani had no authority to make such concessions on behalf of the Hindus. While the demand for the return of all the thousands of places of worship forcibly taken by Muslims is voiced only by an extremist fringe in the VHP and Bajrang Dal, the attachment to the three places specially dedicated to Shiva (the Kashi Vishvanath in Varanasi), Krishna (his Janmasthan in Mathura) and Rama is non-negotiable for most activist Hindus.

Even so, while Advani offered to renounce all claims, no matter how justified, to any disputed place beyond this one Ram Janmabhoomi, his offer was spurned by Syed Shahabuddin. He said that first raising the demand to three temple hand-over as a compromise was just an old merchant's trick. As if the demand for the return of these sacred places is new and just a bargaining chip : the Hindus have rebuilt and reclaimed the Krishna and Shiva temples (as well as other demolished temples) many times, until Aurangzeb imposed the structures standing there till today. After independence, the demand for the handover of these three places was made in Parliament on September 1, 1961 by the Jan Sangh leader Balraj Madhok (who was to reiterate it in the same forum in 1968), even before the VHP came into existence.⁶⁵ The demand for three temples was itself already very modest compared to the thousands of temples-turned-mosque which the Hindus could claim (it was, moreover, coupled with an offer to

pay for the building of three fine mosques nearby). So, Shahabuddin's reply had in reality nothing to do with bargaining chips and merchants' tricks.

The real reason for refusing any deal on the disputed temple sites was more probably this. Since the Quran does not say that Muslims should make compromise with the Kafirs, Shahabuddin and other Muslim leaders who have a "*Muslim India*" in mind, could not but refuse every concession. It reminded the Hindus of that scene in the Mahabharat : the Pandavas offer the Kauravas the whole country except for five villages, whereupon the Kauravas declare they would not grant them even a speck of land the size of a pinhead. Of course, as Krishna pointed out to the Pandavas, with such self-righteous and intransigent fanatics, no compromise is possible. They have to be defeated.

This boundless self-righteousness on the part of certain Muslim leaders is bound to confirm the negative image that Islam has in the Hindu mind. The continued Muslim intransigence represented by a Shahabuddin genuinely angers many Hindus. And when the confrontation, which communalist leaders keep preferring to any kind of compromise, materializes into riots, it is the common Muslim, not the communalist leader, who is bearing the consequences. If only for his own safety, if only for some peace with his neighbours, the common Muslim is not averse to compromise. He is willing and able (with the open-mindedness which is a remarkably strong trait in the common people in India) to see the Hindu side of the controversy.

But these conciliating voices in the Muslim community have not been heard at all. Not by the V.P. Singh government, which has treated BMAC leader Abdullah Bukhari as a high-powered cabinet minister (the "*Sarkari Imam*"). Not by the government of Chandra Shekhar, who is closely linked with BMMCC leader Syed Shahabuddin. Certainly not by Mulayam's Uttar Pradesh Ministry, counting among its members BMAC co-founder Mohammed Azam Khan. Nor even by Rajiv Gandhi's Congress Party, whose spokesman M.J. Akbar uses the secularism plank as just another forum for the anti-Mandir and anti-Hindu campaign.⁶⁶

What is far worse is that the secularist intelligentsia have joined the politicians' effort to black out the conciliatory current within Muslim opinion, and have broadcast that very perception which is basic to the

fanatic leaders' stand, viz. that "*Islam is in danger*" and that absolutely no concession to "*Hindu communalism*" can be tolerated. The whole jeremiad of Muslims being a poor and persecuted community, of communal peace (i.e., for the ordinary Muslim, his own safety) standing or falling with the Babri Masjid, of Advani being a fascist out to destroy the Muslims, all this press hysteria was exactly what the Muslim communal leaders wanted the common Muslim to hear and believe. The opinion of some Hindu authors⁶⁷, that secularist rhetoric is effectively a some screen behind which the Muslim communalists can steal a march, stands vindicated.

Fortunately, human nature is stronger than even Islamic fanaticism. When Chandra Shekhar formed his Cabinet, he kept several portfolios to himself, intending to give them to somewhat controversial friends. Who would be among the lucky ones ? The answer came in the form of a letter by Syed Shahabuddin, published in Indian Express on December 13, 1990. He wrote: "*The law protects the Babri Masjid even if it was constructed on the site of a temple after demolishing it, but in the interest of communal amity, as a one-time exception, the Muslim community is ready to make the offer as a moral gesture, in accordance with the Shariat.*"⁶⁸ Here also, the question is legitimate whether he can really speak for "*the Muslim community*". Nonetheless, it is fortunate that Syed Shahabuddin seems to prefer a ministerial post to the lost cause of Babri Masjid.

However, one Muslim's temporary human weakness could not suffice for bringing the entire Muslim side to accepting the Hindu rights to the Janmabhoomi spot. With two rivaling Masjid Committees around, any concession would only be branded as a betrayal by the other committee. So, actually making a concession was very difficult, but even if made, it would not bring conciliation, since the other committee would not endorse it and continue threatening *agitation* if the Babri structure were touched.

So, even when after 2 November 1990 nobody in his right mind persisted in denying the Hindus the right to their sacred place, a decisive fraction in the Muslim leadership (supported by a decisive fraction in the secularist intelligentsia) continued to insist on confrontation. The arrangement which had seemed to be in the making, was forgotten and Syed Shahabuddin

resumed his more familiar hard-line tirades. As with the Kauravas, no compromise with the Muslim fundamentalists.

Chapter 7. Press Reporting on Ayodhya

7.1 Reporting on Kar Seva

On October 30, 1990 thousands of Kar Sevaks moved to the disputed place in Ayodhya. They had somehow sneaked through the impediments which chief minister Mulayam and his security forces had put in their way. In fact, the saga of how the people did it, is the stuff movies are made of. Hiding in jungles, swimming across the river at night, being caught and then escaping from prison to move on to Ayodhya (as firebrand BJP MP Uma Bharati did, making herself unrecognizable), it must have been quite an adventure for the people who did it.

However, this adventurous aspect of the Ayodhya development has not been given much attention in the press. In fact, what was lacking rather systematically from the reports, was an attempt to see the events from the Kar Sevaks' side.⁶⁹ In some places, attention was given to the political assessment of the events from the BJP and VHP leadership's viewpoint. But mostly, Indian journalists identified with the governmental or the law- and-order viewpoint.

On the evening of Kar Seva day, Doordarshan gave a totally streamlined news bulletin. It said nothing of the storming of the building, nor of the climbing of the domes or the planting of the flags, nor of the damage done to the surrounding wall, nor of the way the police had managed to drive the people back. It declared that no Kar Seva had taken place, that the police had full control, that they had to control a *violent mob*, that this violent mob had *tried* to climb the domes and had *tried* to plant flags on top of them. And it showed a heretic film shot of the Babri Masjid still standing there, unharmed. Then, an extremely boring queue of political leaders came to declare that communal harmony must be maintained at all costs. From a statement by a BJP spokesman, the part on communal harmony was shown

but not the actual BJP view on the Ayodhya problem. Finally, a lot of attention was given to *human chains* for communal amity in Delhi and Kerala.

One sweet is delicious, but a bagful of them is just nauseating. Fifteen minutes of this *communal harmony* mantra was just insupportable, atleast in a news bulletin. In no free democratic country is the news ever so blacked out by streamlined propaganda. Although the message drilled into the viewers' heads was a rather harmless one, the news programme was formally a purely Stalinist show. This replacement of news by government advice to maintain communal harmony was of course for the viewers' own good.⁷⁰

Now the scandal is that some newspapers, which normally champion the right to information, actually supported this round of censorship. In a column titled Responsible Censorship, Rajdeep Sardesai called the Doordarshan version, including the statement by V.P. Singh, "*blatant untruth*".⁷¹ What a stern condemnation, you think. But then he continues and starts justifying this lie for the people's own good, "*to shield viewers from the increasing potency of Hindu nationalism*". Those people who had "*expected [Doordarshan] to telecast Kar Sevaks climbing the walls of the Babri Masjid*" and who "*expect Doordarshan to be just a dispassionate observer of events*", have understood nothing of despotic secularism. "*They insist that the viewer's right to know should not be interfered with in any way. Such a line of thought is a victim of some diffused libertarian doctrine where the right to know survives only in unvarnished, absolutist form. However, transporting and adapting such western concepts to the Indian scenario is unrealistic...*"

This twisting of concepts to justify despotism, concludes by claiming that censorship was necessary to "*prevent our right to information from spreading mayhem in the country*", because "*on an emotive temple-masjid issue that threatens to polarize the nation the electronic medium cannot allow the people to live through symbols and inflammatory images*". So this censorship has prevented riots ? One wouldn't say so, judging from mr. Sardesai's own remark: "*That the possibility of communal violence erupting was great has been proved by subsequent events.*" Without accepting his

implied assumption that the subsequent riots engineered by Muslim communalists in Aligarh, Hyderabad and other places were consequences of the Kar Seva, I do notice that Mr. Sardesai's "*subsequent events*" have not merely proved "*the possibility of communal violence*". They have proved that this communal violence was going to take place even after Doordarshan censorship. Everybody knows that Doordarshan is telling "*blatant untruth*", so rumors become the chief source of information, and they are usually a lot more "*inflammatory*" than a reliable and accurate news bulletin would have been.⁷²

On the newspaper front, there have been some more startling events. When seven local U.P. dailies published realistic estimates of the death toll on November 2, instead of Mulayam's "*sixteen*", all issues were rounded up from the bookstalls, and a number of scribes and editors were arrested. Moreover, during the Kar Seva week, journalists in U.P. were continually harassed and prevented from doing their job. The Press Council, the Delhi Journalists' Association, the Himachal Pradesh Working Journalists' Union, and many other journalists' organizations, have strongly protested against this attack on the press. On the other hand, some organizations and ad hoc platforms have condemned the U.P. papers for giving "*highly exaggerated figures*" and otherwise "*inflammatory*" reporting. In other words, they repeated the U.P. government justification for its anti-press measures.

Another startling fact is that the English-language papers refused to come up with the correct figures of the Kar Sevaks killed in police firing. In the afternoon of November 2, I was visiting someone who has connections with a well-known daily. He called the office and was told by one staff reporter that the death toll was already 125. Now, if a reporter of a secularist paper says 125 got killed, no one is going to make me believe that the number is less than 125. Yet, the following day, the headlines of the same paper put the death toll at 17.

I have inquired about the massacre among many people in Ayodhya. Common local people, including eyewitnesses, said invariably that thousands had been killed : two thousand, five thousand. I guess that even eyewitnesses were not in a position to count very accurately. However, the

different accounts given to me by hospital personnel, policemen, Hindu activists, converge to a death toll of about 400. The official death toll of 45 for the different days of shooting together is quite untenable, considering that the VHP cremated 76 bodies, of which the ashes were taken in procession through India, while some bodies had been taken in procession through India, while some bodies had been taken for cremation by the families, and many more had been collected and taken away by the security forces (three trucks full, according to VHP sources). The figure of 168 which the BJP gave the day after, gives the correct order of magnitude, but probably on the low side.

So, if some papers stick to figures below 20, they are just telling lies. Some of them have been so adamant in their misinformation campaign that they refused to mention any other figure even when quoting from speeches by BJP or VHP people, replacing "500 were killed" with "a number were killed". Yet, it seems no one has had the courage to file a plaint with the Press Council against this blatant misinformation. On the contrary: two months after the massacre, the Press Council has condemned the dailies that gave three-digit figures (even if as low as 120).

Mani Shankar Aiyar has tried to ridicule Uma Bharati's concern for the Ram bhaktas killed in Ayodhya, arguing that the "*real issue*" is: what were they doing there is the first place?⁷³ After all, they wanted to break the law and demolish the "mosque", didn't they? And if you want to demolish a mosque, you deserve to be killed, don't you? Several press people I talked to, defended the shooting with the same argument: after all, the structure had to be saved "*at all costs*".

The point is not merely that these people overlook the fact that normally the Kar Sevaks could have been driven away with far less killing, and the other fact that the VHP had declared it had no intention of demolishing the structure. The point is that they are deadly serious when they declare that hundreds (or for them, at least, some twenty) of human lives are worth less than *secularism*, here embodied in the brick structure. This means that they contend that bricks can be the embodiment of some mental projection, some god (in this case : Secularism, the Merciful), which is the very principle of idolatry : a material object becomes the archanavatar (*worship- incarnation*)

of a spiritual reality. But their idolatry is of the barbaric type: this embodied principle of theirs sometimes requires human sacrifice. The JNU historians had once scornfully written that the Hindu view is better expressed by the openness of the Upanishads than by "*worshipping bricks*".⁷⁴ But who is worshipping bricks now ? Who is bringing human sacrifices now to an idol of brick ?

If you keep this dispute in its proper historical perspective, the ruthless anti-Hindu and pro-slaughter stand of the secularist press becomes only logical. They defend killing not just for the sake of a piece of property protected by the law of the land: when the police is *communalized* and *guilty of atrocities*. Here, they defend killing of unarmed people suspected (against the VHP's own assurance) of intending to "*demolish*" a masterpiece of the Muslim campaign to exterminate Hinduism. I must grant them consistency : it is indeed logical that mass killing is resorted to in order to honor and protect this brick idol of anti-Hindu fervour, built for the god of Jihad by a mass-murderer.

To be sure, there are press people who honestly and in good faith disbelieve the established historical fact that the Masjid had forcibly replaced a Mandir. They don't realize that the Masjid is a product of the most cruel and violent communalism. They really believe it is an innocent mosque stolen and singled out for demolition by Hindu fanatics, and that it must be defended as the nation's last stronghold against a Khomeini-like religious dictatorship. A meta-press is needed to inform these misguided press people.

7.2. Foreign press reporting

The foreign press has not added any extra facts or perspective to the reporting on Ayodhya. It has mostly copied the bias of the Indian press. Time Magazine gave a not too unbalanced report, but quoted two of the JNU historians without telling its readers that these are not neutral academics but highly involved parties in the controversy. Newsweek had done the same at the time of the Shilanyas. Then, it had quoted Romila Thapar as saying that "*the BJP may be more interested in cow protection*

than in people protection", without anyhow putting this heavy allegation in perspective or hearing the BJP's own stand.

This time, Newsweek gave an unbelievably biased report. It simply did not mention the shot-out against unarmed Kar Sevaks on November 2, following the Indian secularists' line that you should grant the Hindus nothing, not even their martyrs. But it did mention a selected part of the Gonda carnage, a colorful description of the murder of Muslims in Kanje Mau (Gonda), concealing the fact that this carnage had started with an attack on a Hindu procession.

This reporting on a riot without telling how it erupted, is like starting the history of World War II with the Allied *aggression* in Normandy or the bombing of Dresden. Of course the bombings of Dresden and Hiroshima were unjustifiable war crimes, but they are judged less harshly because they were part of a war effort which had been forced on the Allies by the Axis powers. Normally, any report on a conflict, no matter how summary, relates how it began, and who started it. If this is not done and one act of violence is presented in isolation, then that is a case of wilful distortion.

About the dispute itself, the foreign press has not re- layed the Hindu viewpoint at all. Most papers and weeklies have at no point informed their readers that the disputed place is functionally not a mosque but a flourishing Ram temple. It has continually given the impression that the Hindus want to take a mosque (often mistakenly called a Muslim "*sacred place*") from the Muslims, the way Jewish fundamentalists have wanted to take the mosques on the Temple Mount from the Muslims. In fact, it is the BMAC and BMMCC who want to snatch a sacred place from the Hindus, but hardly any foreign reader has been informed of this. On the whole, the foreign press has taken exactly the same attitude (distortions and concealment and all) as the secularist press in India. I have never seen before that all the papers for weeks on end reported something that was so diametrically the opposite of what was really happening.

This is at first sight very strange. The Western readership has no love lost for Islam. It is not only that Muslim terrorists have killed quite a few Westerners, or that they have persecuted and put to flight many of the remaining Christians in the Muslim world, or that they continue to threaten

Israel (with which most Westerners keep sympathizing). The distrust is deeper. Compare the uneasy reaction of Europeans when they see a woman in burqa on their streets, with their pleasant surprise when they see a woman in sari: that tells the story in a nutshell. The Westerners' natural sympathy would be with the Hindu rather than with the Muslim side. Yet, almost all the Western papers have chosen to blacken Hinduism almost as thoroughly as the secularist Indian press has done.

The first reason is that the Western correspondents in Delhi just don't know very much, and also don't feel the need to find out more. Their work is not considered important by their editors, because India is still perceived as a backward and economically unimportant country. Western correspondents in Delhi are very lazy. I have been to some press conferences concerning this Ayodhya affair (which involves principles, has generated an unprecedented mass movement, and has toppled a government), and not met any foreign press persons there. In Ayodhya and in the offices of those very people that could give authentic background information, again I did not see any foreign correspondents. I don't know what they tell their employers, but I can testify first-hand that they are not doing any journalistic work here, except for copying the Indian English-language papers.

The second reason is that they very uncritically swallow that version of the facts which happens to reach them. Since they hang out a lot with the westernized clique that controls the media, education and the government, they don't know better than that those people's viewpoint is authoritative.

Here, one cannot fail to notice the utter failure of the Hindu movement to present its case. They could have sent a bundle of copies of relevant articles to the foreign press corps, as well as some relevant books, like *Hindu Temples : What Happened to Them* by **Arun Shourie** and others. The VHP leaders have not even thought of the importance of publicizing their case. Rather, with their Janmabhoomi campaign they have unintentionally managed to blacken Hinduism in the face of the world. They have not cared to check whether they were getting their message across. Their movement has behaved like a dinosaur with a lot of muscle but little brain.^{[75](#)}

The third reason why Western correspondents have sided with the Nehruvian Babri Masjid advocates, is that they still entertain the colonial attitude that those backward Hindus have to learn the European civilized ways that Nehru so far-sightedly tried to transmit to them. In the wake of the Leftist-inspired wave of political anti-colonialism of the last decades, a cultural anti-colonialism has come up, a sympathy for other cultures (which was new : Leftist anti-colonialism, following the arch-colonialist Karl Marx, meant protest against the too slow westernization of the Third World). But that only concerns those cultures which have been beaten to near-death (in the New World), or those of which we are economically or physically afraid (Japan, Islam). When the last remnant of a Native American tribe wins a court case to reclaim ancestral burial ground, everybody sympathizes. But when a culture really and substantially asserts itself, not in terrorist attacks or export surplus, but in its intrinsic otherness, then the old colonial bias turns out to stand unshaken.

This anti-native and pro-westernizing bias is quite systematically present in India reporting. It generally takes the form of gross misrepresentation of Indian culture. For example, time and again those correspondents write to the homefront that there are *still* many dowry deaths. Now everybody knows that dowry deaths typically occur in the westernized circles (the dowries concerned are seldom the traditional jewels, but mostly video-machines etc.): they are not a traditional phenomenon that *still* exists, but are a typical case of the perverting and poisoning of a native custom by the invasion of Western consumerism.^{[76](#)}

I will refrain from giving some names of Western correspondents who after years in Delhi didn't know the first word of Hindi or any other native tongue, and consequently limited their background information gathering to some talks with the anglicized elite, not realizing that the latter has been cultivating an utter ignorance about Indian culture for decades. But I do want to point out that the result is a very derogatory style of reporting, reflecting not only journalist's prejudices, but also the anglicized elite's utter contempt for their indigenous culture.

Meanwhile in the Western news studios, indologists have been invited to comment on the communalism issue. But those people are steeped in art

history (like publishing books about Hindu temple architecture without even mentioning that most samples are only indirectly known since the Muslim rulers destroyed them) and similar ancient stuff, and they too have the Times of India as their only source for contemporary news. Moreover, with all their orientation towards *culture*, they positively dislike Hinduism, or an innocent Gandhian kind of Hinduism, and they readily buy the secularist story that an assertive Hinduism is not the "*real Hinduism*".

Finally, there is one more kind of India-watcher or India-fan in the West, with a typical and remarkable attitude to the Ayodhya affair: the "*seekers*". Some people staying in India for spiritual things, and who were told that I was writing about this Ayodhya affair, immediately came out with their superior scorn for such unspiritual quarrels : "*What are those Kar Sevaks going to Ayodhya for? To lay the second brick?*"

What these people should realize, is that the society which has allowed ashrams to flourish, has only survived because it also had a martial component. Why are they not going to Afghanistan for yoga? because Hinduism in Afghanistan got militarily defeated and annihilated . Because Islam, which in their own woolly world-view is just as true as any other religion, has weeded out the kind of Pagan practices that they come to India for. If there is a part of the world left where the gurus can continue their traditional, it is because Hindus have fought. It is a non-violent part of the same martial tradition, that today Hindus are asserting themselves in Ayodhya.

Chapter 8. The Misuse of History

8.1 Caught in the act of distorting history

The Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue has highlighted several more fundamental problems which will have to be dealt with decisively. Perhaps the most important one is the intellectual dishonesty which dominates India's official ideology and its arena of public debate. One area where this dishonesty has been having a free ride during the last several decades, is history-writing. A case in point is the JNU historians' statement on Ayodhya, published in November 1989: *The Political Abuse of History*.

In a reply⁷⁷ to the JNU professor' statement, Prof. A.R.Khan has exposed a number of attempts at distortion and deceit in their statement. I may cite the simplest and clearest case: they try to pass off the fact that Babar's diary doesn't mention the Ayodhya temple demolition as proof that it never took place. While this reasoning correctly presupposes that mentioning temple destruction would be perfectly coherent with Babar's enthusiasm for pious acts of Kafir persecution, it disregards the fact that the pages reporting on the relevant months have been lost. This fact of the missing pages is well-known to anyone familiar with the subject. But instead of admitting that Babar's own testimony is lost, they pretend that his absent testimony warrants some conclusions.

In their re-reply⁷⁸ to Prof.Khans critique, they had on choice but to admit that Babar's testimony is just not available. Nevertheless, in a newspaper column one of them, Harbans Mukhia, has re-employed the discredited argument once more.⁷⁹ The secularist Muslim writer Asghar Ali Engineer has also used it⁸⁰, but I will give him the benefit of the doubt: he may have naively trusted the authority of his "*eminent JNU historians*."

Another attempt at distortion, in the context of Muslim rulers' patronage for Hindu institutions is pointed out by Prof.Khan as follows: "*It may be noted that in the first two evidences the authors have deliberately concealed*

*the fact that both the diwans [prime ministers] were Hindus. [By contrast], while mentioning about the gifts by the officials of the Nawabi court to Hindu priests (in their third evidence), they have not forgotten to state that the officials were Muslims. This not only amounts to concealment of evidence but also distortion of evidence."*⁸¹ I would concede that this selective highlighting of useful elements in the context of a polemic is not all that outrageous if it occurs once. But in the case of the JNU historians, it forms part of an over-all pattern of wilful misrepresentation of the facts.

A.A. Engineer's book on the Ram Janmabhoomi affair, Babri Masjid Ram Janmabhoomi Controversy, is merely a collection of newspaper columns on the subject, or rather a selection, for the above mentioned pertinent critiques by dr. Harsh Narain, A.K. Chatterjee and Prof. A.R. Khan (historians equal in rank to the JNU statement signatories), as well as the relevant articles by Arun Shourie, Ram Swarup, Sita Ram Goel and Jay Dubashi, have been carefully omitted, eventhough they had been published well in time for inclusion in mr. Engineer's anthology. The only two pro-Hindu articles which he has designed to include, both published in the RSS paper Organizer, were selected for their containing a few weak arguments and poor comparisons, which he then takes on in his introduction. Where of course he does not offer any criticism to the JNU historians' statement nor to any other article included in his volume. As a presentation of the debate, mr. Engineer's book is on a par with the JNU professors' presentation of the historical facts : *it is a distortion.*⁸²

The secularists just go on upholding the statement of their JNU friends as the definitive scientific judgment on the matter. Two weeks after Harsh Narain's article had been published and had disproven the *Janmabhoomi myth* concoction thesis, the Illustrated Weekly decided to publish the already well-publicized JNU statement once more. Even after A.R. Khan's reply had exploded the objective and scientific pretence of the JNU historians, the whole secularist crowd kept on quoting the *eminent historians*. More than half a year later, the leftist paper Mainstream still quotes them as "*several eminent historians whose professional honesty nobody questions.*"⁸³ Well, I for one do question their professional honesty.

8.2 Some recent myths

When Romila Thapar tries to make gullible readers believe that Mahmud Ghaznavi only desecrated temples for their wealth⁸⁴, she must know (assuming, as all her quoters do, that she is competent historian) that Mahmud is revered by the Muslims as a devout Muslim, that he calligraphed Quran text "*for the benefit of his soul*", and that he actually refused a huge ransom which Hindus were ready to pay if he agreed to give back an idol, instead of breaking it. Mahmud preferred breaking idols to selling them, even if that meant foregoing wealth. So her theory of Mahmud's economical rather than religious motives is at best an unscientific imposition of Marxist dogma upon the facts of Indian history, otherwise a deliberate lie.

She is of course in the good company of Jawaharlal Nehru, who declared that "*as a matter of fact, Mahmud was hardly a religious man. He was a Mohammedan, of course, but that was just by the way*".⁸⁵ And he in turn only followed the lead given by Mohammed Habib and the Aligarh school of historians, who tried to whitewash Islam by blaming external and personal factors for the crimes to which Islam had prompted its champions.

In the case of their purely concocted grand theory of pre-Muslim persecution of Buddhism by Hindus, we see our leftist historians throw all standards of source criticism to the wind. Such is their eagerness to uphold this convenient hypothesis, and their care not to endanger what little supportive testimony there is. After all, from the millennia of pre-Muslim religious pluralism in India, there are not even five testimonies of such persecution, so these few should be scrupulously kept away from criticism.

Therefore, the fact that the very first *testimony* of Pushyamitra Shunga's alleged persecution of the Buddhists dates from three centuries after the facts, is not treated as a ground for some caution with this *evidence*. Nor is any alternative interpretation of his alleged behaviour (e.g. that his anger was not directed against Buddhism but against the corruption that was overtaking the monasteries) being explored, the way all kinds of mitigating explanations are invented for the Islamic crimes. The allegation is simply repeated, and amplified, in all secularist history-books.

Hsuen Tsang's contention, from hearsay, that the Shaiva king Shashank had persecuted Buddhists and felled the Bodhi tree, also goes unquestioned. Yet, his story is just visibly untrustworthy : he claims that a replanted sapling of the Bodhi tree (which, from his story, must have been felled only a few years before his own arrival) miraculously grew overnight into a mature tree. Remember that secularist historians reject myths and irrational beliefs? What Hsuen Tsang got to see with his own eyes was a tree far bigger than a recently replanted sapling could have been: an indication that the tree had never been felled in the first place. Yet, so many secularist history books go on declaring that "*fanatical Shashank felled the Bodhi tree*", in defiance of proper historical criticism.⁸⁶

When it comes to dealing with the history of persecution and temple destruction by the Muslims, secularist historians throw all regard for hard evidence to the wind and replace it with a purely deductive (which is typically medieval) approach : Islam is tolerant, therefore the destruction and persecution cannot have taken place.

Thus, Sushil Srivastava writes : "*It has been contended by the British observers that the desecration of the Hindu temple at Ayodhya was undertaken to extend Islam in India. This contention clearly indicates that the destroyers of the temples were religious fanatics well versed in the dictates of their religion.*"⁸⁷ The contention is well-founded: many Muslim conquerors, including Teimur and Babar, quoted from the Quran in their announcements and descriptions of their jihads. Many Muslim rulers were encouraged into jihad by court clerics whose knowledge of the Quran is above suspicion.

But mr. Srivastava knows it all better: "*However, the Quran clearly states that prayers offered at a contentious place will not be accepted. A mosque constructed on the site of a temple would definitely be a contentious place. Thus, the whole purpose of constructing a masjid on the site of a mandir would be self-defeating... In this context, I would like to advance my view that it is highly unlikely that even the contentious mosques in Varanasi and Mathura are located on the exact sites of temples. Near the location of a destroyed temple, possible ; on the same spot, not likely.*"

Mr. Srivastava's hair-splitting about whether a mosque is built on top of or just next to a destroyed temple, is quite beside the point. Especially for the people who see their temple destroyed, it doesn't make the slightest difference. Moreover, his totally undocumented theory is purely deductively based on a book he clearly doesn't know at all: the Quran.

Whatever ban on building mosques in contentious places there is in the Quran (i.e. none) or at least in the Hadis, exclusively concerns conflict within the Muslim community, or with a community with which it has a treaty (like the Jews in the first Medina years). The Quran in no way forbids the taking or destroying of Pagan temples. To put all doubts concerning the absolute non-respect for Pagan places of worship to rest, it will suffice to point out that the Kaaba itself is a "*contentious*" place of worship, taken from the Arab polytheists who strongly resented this, and Islamized by breaking all the 360 sacred idols in it.

Mr. Srivastava's purely deductive (also called dogmatic) position leads him to disregard well-known hard evidence. The contentious Gyanvapi mosque (as well as many others) visibly stands on the place of a Hindu temple : the latter's walls are partly still standing and form part of the mosque's wall. But our secularist historian unstoppably goes on deducing : *"Could a devout Muslim like Babar, knowledgeable of the tenets of the Quran, have allowed such a faux pas as the construction of a mosque bearing his name at the spot where an important temple had existed ?"* For secularist true believers, such rhetorical questions clinch the issue.

8.3 Disregarding the evidence

A fresh case of utter disregard for hard evidence is the central argument of the reply⁸⁸ by the inescapable JNU historians to dr. S.P. Gupta's archaeological arguments⁸⁹ for the pre-existence of a temple at the Babri Masjid spot. Dr. Gupta had written that the pillar-bases and the glazen ware can be accurately dated; and of course, with the available archaeological high-tech, as well as with the knowledge of art history, they can. But the JNU historians simply disregard the dating and declare that the fact that the pillar-bases were found in the upper layer, "*would certainly not make them*

as early as the eleventh century since the uppermost levels would be comparatively recent". Well, compared to the Valmiki or the Ram era, from which nothing was found during these excavations, unless Ram is put later than the eighth century BC (a fact noted with satisfaction by the JNU historians in their well-known statement), the eleventh century is rather recent. It depends on very local factors whether old objects can be found just below the surface rather than deep down ; the sheer depth at which an object is found, is not a dating method. They themselves do not come up with an alternative scientific dating method, even while dismissing dr. Gupta's results.

As for the pottery, of which dr. Gupta says that it "*can be firmly dated : some belong to the thirteenth, some the fourteenth and some the fifteenth century*", they have no comment on his dating methods, but assert : "*This style of pottery first comes into use in Persia and therefore cannot date to an earlier period in India*". Actually, the JNU historians just haven't done their homework on this count. What only appeared in Iran in the fifteenth century, was a specific type of glazen war, china, but less refined kinds of glazen ware had been around since the eleventh century.

The JNU historians even assert : "*Thus the evidence of the pottery would point to the bases being constructed not earlier than the fifteenth century and possibly even a later period.*" That later period would then be when the Babri Masjid was already standing there, but in JNU historiography there is nothing against the co-existence of temple and mosque right on the same spatial location. Anyway, they go as far as deducing the age of the building from the age of the pottery. That means that if you have a computer in your house, this proves that your house cannot possibly be older than the manufacture of the computer. And all this funny JNU argumentation is based on the non-motivated disregard for the scientific dating of the pillar-bases to the eleventh century and the pottery shaves to the thirteenth to fifteenth century. Either they should have accepted those datings, or they should have shown the method by which they were obtained, to be unsound.

In a lecture⁹⁰ just after the publication of the JNU historians' reply, dr. Gupta has explained : "*Several of the temple-pillars existing in the mosque*

and pillar- bases unearthed in the excavations conducted in the south of the mosque (although in the adjoining plot of land) show the same directional alignment. This will convince any student of architecture that two sets of material remains belong to one and the same complex. Secondly, the archaeological history of Islamic glazed ware in India goes back to the eleventh century, not the fifteenth ; in the fifteenth only a particular type of glazed ware was brought to India. Here at Ayodhya one kind of Islamic glazed ware was even a local imitation of the thirteenth century. Therefore, when we observe that here we recovered Islamic glazed ware of different periods, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, from below the floor level of the mosque, we are telling the truth of archaeological discoveries."

One point of progress was that in this round of the debate (December 1990), the JNU historians already had to admit that there had been a building there. And that is new. In their well-known statement they had declared : *"So far, no historical evidence has been unearthed to support the claim that the Babri mosque has been constructed on the land that had been earlier occupied by a temple."* Now, the interesting thing is that the archaeological findings on which dr. S.P. Gupta has reported in the article to which the JNU historians have replied, date from years before their original statement. What is more, one of the main sources for their statement was Prof. B.B. Lal's report on the same findings, in which it is, clearly though briefly, stated that remains of a pre-Masjid building had been found.⁹¹ When they said there was no archaeological evidence, they were bravely lying.

The noted indologist Iravatham Mahadevan, also editor of Dinamani, in a lecture in Madras on 4/12/90, has drawn attention to the fact that while the JNU pamphlet starts off by citing Prof. Lal's conclusions on the ancient settlement issue, though without mentioning him by name, it is surprisingly silent on his other major finding -- that a temple (or at least some building) had existed at the Masjid site. Mr. Mahadevan squarely held the JNU historians guilty of what they try to lay at the door of others : *"political abuse of history"*.⁹²

8.4 Historians arguing ad hominem

The JNU historians in their reply try to escape by stating that it is B.B. Lal who changed his version of the findings. They quote his report : "*...the site was again occupied around the eleventh century A.D. Several later medieval brick-and-kankar lime floors have been met with, but the entire late period was devoid of any special interest.*" And they comment : "*These earlier statements contradict his present claim to having found the pillar-bases of what may have been a temple at the site, a claim recently made by him in the RSS magazine Manthan (October 1990)*". These earlier statements rather prove that there was a building on the spot. Even this earlier report in no way excludes that this building "*may have been a temple*", especially considering its location. And in the Manthan article, B.B. Lal does not claim anything new, and does not positively state that it must have been a temple : this cannot be proven from the pillar-bases, only from other types of evidence, such as the use of the black pillars in the Babri Masjid. B.B. Lal has not changed his stand at all. The evidence that a building was replaced by the Babri Masjid was there in his earlier report, on the basis of which the JNU historians had claimed the non-availability of any archaeological indication of a pre-existent temple.

The JNU historians stoop so low as to insinuate that Prof. Lal is distorting evidence to suit certain political compulsions : "*Could it be that the requirements of VHP politics have occasioned this new claim ?*" And also : "*One wonders why, if there was any such evidence, B.B. Lal is only revealing it now. Could it be that because of the politics of the Janmabhoomi, it is being claimed as fresh evidence ?*" And that from historians who themselves have distorted evidence in order to satisfy certain political compulsions : apparently a case of what psychologists call projection.

Dr. Mahadevan's remarks on the Ayodhya affair and against the JNU historians, have received support from another archaeologist, Muhammed K.K., deputy superintending archaeologist of the ASI Madras circle. He writes : "*...Mr. Mahadevan's comments were really an objective analysis of the archaeological data. I can reiterate this with greater authority, for I was the only Muslim who had participated in the Ayodhya excavation in 1976-77 under professor Lal...I was at the Hanuman Garhi site, but I have visited the excavation near the Babri Masjid and seen the excavated pillar bases.*"

The JNU historians have highlighted only one part of our findings while suppressing the other." He adds that destroying mosques to right historical wrongs is wrong, but : "*Ayodhya is as holy to Hindus as Mecca is to Muslims. Muslims should respect the sentiments of their millions of Hindu brethren and voluntarily hand over the structure for constructing the Rama temple.*"⁹³

Another top archaeologist who has come out against the JNU historians' high-handed intervention in the archaeological debate, is Prof. K.V. Raman, head of the Madras University Archaeology Department. Noticing that the most vocal ones among the JNU historians are not archaeologists or even specialists in medieval history, Prof. Raman reiterates that the report published earlier was not the complete report and focused mainly on the period presumed to be that of the Ramayana. So the question is merely whether Prof. Lal has recorded his recently divulged findings in the so far unpublished report : "*When Lal says he has indeed done so, I see no reason why anyone should doubt him on that score.*"⁹⁴

The JNU historians also try to raise suspicions against Dr. Gupta : "*In his excavation reports, B.B. Lal mentions those who excavated along with him, and curiously, despite his insisting that he was part of the team, the name of Dr. S.P. Gupta is conspicuously absent.*" Well, what an allegation. Do the JNU historians really think that dr. Gupta would risk his academic reputation by making a false claim of having participated in this research ? They themselves of course can get away with blatant lies, because they are shielded by a politically motivated press against any criticism that would threaten their *eminence*. But real scientists do not count on such exemptions. The fact of the matter is that Dr. Gupta was involved in the research as an *observer*, and that in his article against which the JNU historians sent their reply, he has merely claimed that he "*was for some time connected with the research work done at the site*", which is impeccably truthful.

In his lecture, Dr. Gupta has replied to the JNU insinuations : "*In 1975-76 our primary aim was to find out the antiquity of the site, and not the temple. Hence the brief reports did not mention it. It is common knowledge that when we excavate, we record everything we find and all of them appear*

in the final report. That is why we are extremely sorry to see the oblique attack on us as if we are 'planting' evidence now which never existed before. But then finally, does it really speak highly of my friends to tell people that I was not present in the excavations ? Ask the director of excavations, he will say that since I belonged not to the Archaeological Survey of India staff but to the National Museum, I could not be designated as a regular member of the team, I had the status of an 'observer'. But then what ?" The unacademic attitude of these JNU historians, who are stronger in character assassination⁹⁵ than in historical method should make it clear to their critics that there is no reason to feel inhibited when it comes to exposing them. They really deserve to be shown up in public as the impostors they are.

For the rest, the JNU historians' latest attempt to wriggle out from under the inconvenient evidence, is just pitiable. For instance, they state that the presence of the pillar-bases just next to the mosque is no proof that there are more of them underneath (why not demand excavations underneath to settle that uncertainty ?). Their suggestion is, in effect, that there stood a small building with only a very few pillars there (on an elevated spot overlooking the temple city), just next to an empty spot where later the Masjid was built. Apart from being one more ad hoc theoretical construction incoherent with all we know, this is another case of hair-splitting about the exact location, which disregards the central point (that remains unaffected by their hypothesis) that a pre-existent building was demolished and that it has made room for the Babri Masjid.

Moreover, if the pillared building was only standing next to the Masjid site, why wasn't it left standing ? The entire JNU argument is a patchwork of such untenable ad hoc constructions.

8.5 Broadcasting distortions

For all its untenability, the secularist version of history does manage to get amplified continually in the press. The historical debate in Indian Express in the first week of December 1990, which allowed the readers to hear both sides and to make up their own minds, was ignored by most papers, and what much came through, was a systematical distortion.

The Times of India gave no coverage to dr. Gupta's findings, but invited other scholars to air their counter-opinions. In an article with the misleading title "*Ayodhya may be Buddhist site*"⁹⁶, they announce that Prof. R.S. Sharma "*has strongly dismissed the validity of evidence regarding the existence of an eleventh century Ram temple at Ayodhya*". When you read on, you find that he really only denied that it was a Ram temple. Disregarding the presence of distinctly non- Buddhist symbols like the trishul on the black pillar- stones, he opines that remains of a Buddhist temple were used in the Babri Masjid. So, at any rate there was a building, and it was a Kafir temple.

Further down the article, a Prof. V.N. Mishra, director of Deccan College in Pune, is also quoted as saying that Dr. Gupta's findings are *inadequate* and *unconvincing*, but again this turns out to merely refer to the status of the building as a Ram temple (on the doubtful ground that no contemporary Ram temples in Uttar Pradesh have been found), not to its existence or its religious or even its specifically Vaishnava character.⁹⁷

What the readers did not get to read, is that Prof. Mishra is a prehistorian, not at all involved in research concerning the pre-Babri period, and that he was not really interviewed but gave his outsider's opinion casually during a group conversation, not knowing that his opinion would be printed on the Times of India front-page. He has expressed his indignation at these undeontological methods of quoting people without telling them beforehand, and moreover misquoting them.⁹⁸ It just goes to show what unscrupled vipers these secularist journalists are.

That Ayodhya was a chiefly Buddhist town, is an information which Prof. Sharma has taken from the Chinese travellers Fa Hsien and Hsuen Tsang. He cites Hsuen Tsang's highly slanted figures without any critical sense (at least according to the Times of India version of the interview) : Ayodhya had one hundred Buddhist and ten non-Buddhist temples. That the historically attested Jain temples alone already add up to ten, does not seem to make him more cautious in dealing with Hsuen Tsang's highly partisan (and in some places just fabulating) report.

At any rate, nobody had ever doubted the Buddhist presence in Ayodhya. But that is not the point. The point for the Times of India's Arvind N. Das is, to bracket or even replace the facts of Muslim destruction of Hindu places with a postulated Hindu destruction of Buddhist places : *"The historical evidence of the flourishing of Buddhism at Ayodhya and the existence of the Babri Masjid on a mound, typical of the remains of Buddhist stupas in Mohenjo-Daro and elsewhere, provides strong indication to historians and archaeologists that indeed the archaeological remains found in Ayodhya could well belong to Buddhist monasteries which were destroyed by Brahminical onslaught."* (this is apparently the journalist's own insertion, for further on in the article, we see Prof. Sharma suggesting it was a Shaiva temple)

Here, we are facing a central item in the secularist disinformation campaign : the theory that all religions (which the Marxists plan to weed out), with the possible exception of Islam (the proto-socialist religion of equality and brotherhood), were all equally intolerant and given to persecution. Or in the newer and somewhat less anti-religious version : all religions except Hinduism are basically tolerant, but they have been persecuted by the Brahmins and that is why Brahminism has come to dominate India.

To support this theory, all kinds of fantastic exaggerations and pure lies are launched. Thus, the Economic Times manages to rhetorically ask : *"If the Hindus want to demolish mosques which were built on temple sites, should Buddhists ask for the rebuilding of Nalanda University which the Hindus destroyed ?"*⁹⁹ Now, everybody with some education should know that Nalanda University was destroyed in the wake of Mohammed Ghori's conquest of North India. To be more precise, it was destroyed and its staff and students exterminated to the last by Mohammed Bakhtiyar Khilji in 1200. It is not Hinduism but Islam that *"banned Buddhism from its homeland"*.

But what to make of this misdirected allegation : is it utter dishonesty or utter ignorance ? Either way, it is actively or passively part of a disinformation campaign concerning Hindu history, perversely calculated to make Hindus feel guilty for the kind of crimes Islam perpetrated against

them, thus to paralyze and pre-empt criticism of Islam and similar ideologies.

8.6 "They were all fanatics"

As a result of the sustained disinformation campaign that blames Hindus for the destruction of Buddhism, we see Mrs. Savita Ambedkar claiming that the Ram temple was a Buddhist stupa.¹⁰⁰ This is obviously impossible : a stupa is a massive structure, not a pillared building like the one that must have stood on the pillar-bases at the disputed site. But I guess she genuinely believes it herself, in keeping with the theories of her late husband, a non-Nehruvian but equally anti-Hindu thinker. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar's historical writings on Hinduism, Buddhism and the caste system are so full of mistranslations, misinterpretations, and emotional distortions, that it really makes one feel sorry for him, even if it does not mar his memory as the chief framer of India's Constitution. Dr. Ambedkar's merits lie elsewhere, and his theory of a millennia-long Buddhist- Brahmin struggle as the chief determinant of India's socio-political life in pre-Muslim times would have been mercifully forgotten, if there had not been on the one hand casteist politicians who elevate to the rank of dogma every word Ambedkar has written, and on the other hand the Nehruvian historians who have an interest in spreading the same version of history.¹⁰¹

Mrs. Ambedkar could have been saved the embarrassment of her utterly unfounded claim¹⁰², if the prominent Indian historians had done an honest job of debunking the Ambedkarist version of history (which is very much a "*myth claiming the legitimacy of history*", and "*used for political purposes*", against which the JNU historians normally take out crusades). Instead, they have ensured that the myth is now spreading into the collective consciousness via schoolbooks and newspapers.

Another approach to blur the stark contrast between Muslim intolerance and the general Pagan tolerance, is to admit the fact of the temple destructions, adding that all ancient conquerors asserted their authority by destroying temples, and that Muslim temple destruction was just an application of this general rule. Thus, Partha S. Ghosh writes : "*It was a common practice in ancient and medieval times, when the concept of*

sovereignty was not so well-defined, particularly in territorial terms, to assert one's sovereignty over a region by destroying the religious places belonging to the faith of the earlier rulers and then by building one's own on their ruins. It was primarily a political activity and had little to do with religious faith as such."[103](#)

If it was a common practice, it should be easy to verify. But when you go through ancient history, you find almost nothing of the sort. On the contrary, you find that systematically the gods and religious places of even enemy peoples were respected.

In feudal China, the ruling house of a defeated state was not be exterminated, even if its survival meant a political risk : the religious reason for this taboo was that family's ancestral gods had to continue to be worshipped, which only their descendants could properly do. Ch'in Shih Huang violated this rule, and that is one of the reasons for his utter condemnation by the Confucian tradition.

There is in Chinese history one case of alleged religious persecution for purely economical reasons. In the eighth century, a Tang emperor abolished all Buddhist monasteries. They had been exempt from paying taxes, but through donations and legacies, they had become big landholders with enormous revenue, which was all escaping the public treasury. So, the monasteries were abolished as a strictly institutional measure. The monks were not put to the sword, or forbidden to practice and teach Buddhism. It was simply not a case of religious persecution, which is a phenomenon quite alien to the entire Chinese civilization.

The Romans, when they conquered a city, took care not to offend the local gods, and payed a visit to their temples. When they occupied Israel, they took care not to break the Jews' taboo on depicting animal life : of the legions, only those with a tree (rather than an animal) symbol in their standards were posted in Jerusalem. The few religious persecutions in the Roman empire were indeed politically motivated. When the Christians and the Jews, egged on by apocalyptic preachers, expressed their belief that the end of the empire was near, refused to pay respects to the emperor's statues, and even rose in armed rebellion, they were indeed suppressed and persecuted.

When Caesar occupied the Celtic West of Europe, he found that the Druid class was the backbone of this society (the parallel with the Brahmins in the perception of the missionaries is quite exact) : therefore, he persecuted the Druids. However, that campaign had no religious dimension for Caesar: in his description of the Celtic religion, he mentions the Celtic gods by the names of their Roman equivalents, for he understood fully well that there was no fundamental but merely an ethnic difference between the Roman and Celtic religious traditions.

So, whereas the secularist historians claim that religious places were systematically destroyed as a symbol of political sovereignty, in fact the few cases of such destruction took place when the religious centres were effectively centres of political power or rebellion. The rule was respect for priests and temples, but this rule was made subordinate to the rule that centres of political resistance to the empire have to be broken. As a religious centre, the Second Temple in Jerusalem was never destroyed; only when it became a centre of rebellion, the Romans overcame their "superstitious fear" or respect for the alien god that lived in this temple, and moved in to destroy it. Of the hundreds of religions that have existed in the Roman empire, hardly a handful have ever been the object of persecution and temple destruction.

In pre-Muslim Indian history, we again see that after victory, kings systematically went to perform sacrifice in the temple of defeated opponents. And we know that Ram sacrificed to Shiva, the god of his enemy Ravana (after killing Ravana, he also put a member of Ravana's family on the throne, as was the ancient Hindu custom). In fact, with the massive evidence of respect for all temples and all gods, we are still waiting for the Nehruvian *historians* to come up with the very first example of a Hindu king who "*asserted his sovereignty over a region by destroying the religious places belonging to the faith of the earlier rulers*".

Even Pushyamitra Shunga, of whom it is unreliably said by a very non-contemporary source that he had Buddhist monks killed, allowed Buddhist universities to flourish in his kingdom. Even he is not described to have demolished temples on the occasion of his political take-over, his alleged acts of persecution are ascribed by his detractors to purely sectarian

fanaticism.¹⁰⁴ The one apparently reliable report of religious persecution in pre-Muslim India, about the Tamil king Kun Pandya (Arikesari Parankusha Maravarman, 670-710) who had Shaivas killed, then converted (under the influence of his wife's guru Sambandar) and had Jains killed, is also not linked to any assertion of political authority : *he was already safely in power*.

So, the sweeping allegation of a *common practice* of temple destruction as a symbol of political self-assertion, is not based on the facts of history, and goes against abundant evidence to the contrary. A historian who proposes this theory, violates all standards of historical method, and must be deemed either incompetent or dishonest. But even if such a general rule had existed : the Muslim pattern of temple destruction does not conform to it.

When a Muslim ruler conquered another Muslim country, he did not go and destroy the chief mosques. Never, Conversely, Muslim rulers often had temples destroyed when their rule was firmly established and not in need of any assertion. For instance, the Christians of Damascus were at first allowed to keep their cathedral (itself a converted Pagan temple), under the general conditions imposed on zimmi (protected Jews and Christians). However, the Muslim clerics couldn't stand the sight of this proud non-Muslim building, and demanded its conversion into a mosque. The Christians payed huge ransoms in order to be allowed to keep their church, but finally the Caliph gave in to the pressure and had the church converted into a mosque. Financially he lost on it, and politically he didn't need it : the reason for the Muslim take-over of this place of worship was of a different nature, neither economical nor political, but theological.

When under Muslim rule, rebellious princes or generals had used mosques or Sufi centres as head-quarters of their conspiracies, this never led to the destruction of these places of worship. When these places housed wealth, still they were not plundered. But thousands of temples that did not house any conspiracy nor for that matter any wealth , were nonetheless destroyed. If Aurangzeb needed a symbolical act of destruction to assert his authority, why was he not satisfied with destroying only the most important temple of Varanasi, why did he destroy so many of them ? The theories that

Muslim rulers plundered only for wealth, or only to assert their authority, have holes in them on all sides.

The far simpler explanation, corroborated by all the available documents, is that they had a theology of temple destruction, and that this led them to a behaviour pattern unknown in Pagan cultures : proportionate to their military might and to their fervour in the faith, they systematically destroyed Pagan temples. It didn't matter whether these temples had any riches in them or any political significance : in every case it was a scripturally ordained act of great merit to weed out Paganism by destroying Pagan temples and centres of learning, as well as by killing or forcibly converting the Pagans themselves.

If we accept this simple and well-attested fact, then secularist scholar Partha S. Ghosh can get a straightforward answer to his question : "*Do we ever look back to rationalize why after all there are no ancient Buddhist temples in North India when Buddhists had ruled the country for several centuries ?*"¹⁰⁵ Yes, why ? Why are there absolutely no Buddhist temples left in Afghanistan, in Turkestan ? Nor Brahmin or Zoroastrian or Manichaeian temples, for that matter ? This secularist scholar does not seem to know that the Buddhist monasteries and universities were destroyed and exterminated to the last, in India just as well as in Central Asia, by none other than the Muslim armies. So, the answer is that, while Buddhism had been partly reabsorbed into Hinduism, and had partly continued as a separate tradition under Hindu dynasties, the Muslim conquerors finished it off totally.

So, mr. Ghosh may be the Director of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, but as an independent scholar I am not impressed by such titles and positions. His view of the history of religion and persecution is thoroughly flawed. But then, maybe he can't help it, because it seems he picked up his views on history from the JNU "*eminent historians whose professional honesty nobody questions*". And so many more innocent young people are equally being misled by the Nehruvian (i.e. Marxist plus nationalist Muslim) history distorters.

8.7 Up against undeserved authority

Intellectually, these Nehruvian historians and pressmen stand thoroughly discredited. But they have power positions in the media and in the education and research establishments, so they still manage to black out criticism and alternative opinions. A recent example of their power is the nomination of a successor to Leftist Muslim historian Irfan Habib as head of the Indian Council of Historical Research. The expected choice was Prof. G.C. Pande, former vice-chancellor of two universities. But the secularist intelligentsia launched a campaign against him : "*RSS connections loom large*"¹⁰⁶. It is said that Irfan Habib contacted the Shahi Imam, who in turn had a chat with his friend V.P. Singh, prime minister. At any rate, G.C. Pande's name was scrapped from the list of candidates. This is also one more example of the unscrupled connivance between *secularists* and Muslim communalists.

The status and pretence of these Nehruvian historians should be openly challenged, as has been done by Prof. A.R. Khan in his rejoinder to the JNU historians' well-known statement.¹⁰⁷ All secularists have tacitly agreed to absolutely ignore his shattering reply to the *eminent* historians' pamphlet.¹⁰⁸ They know they have been beaten at the intellectual level, but they use their power over the public arena to ensure that these challengers remain in the margins.

In their re-reply to Prof. Khan's critique, the JNU historians wrote haughtily : "*Mr. Khan's misrepresentation of our views on these matters is, we presume, not a deliberate attempt to malign us, but due rather to an unfortunate lack of familiarity with historical sources and an inability to comprehend the language of our argument...*"¹⁰⁹ In other words: whatever your arguments, you can't prevent us from authoritatively putting you in the role of a pitiable nitwit.

Personally, I think I do *comprehend the language* of their argument. But unlike Prof. Khan, I also do advocate *a deliberate attempt to malign* the Nehruvian historians. Not the kind of maligning that they themselves indulge in, taking their cue from Lenin's own advocacy of lies and disinformation as weapons in the revolutionary struggle. Not throwing

swearwords at people, not stigmatizing them with a label (except those they give to themselves, like *secularist*), not trying to suppress their opinions. On the contrary, the stress in a genuine intellectual debate should always be on the contents of people's arguments, no matter what label they have come to carry. A careful scrutiny of their statements and historical theories is all that is needed to expose them and explode their *eminent* status.

This scrutiny may also take into account their record of academic support for (i.e. conferral of respectability on) the classic lies of Communism : the murder of thousands of Polish officers in Katyn, long blamed on the Germans with support from *historians* ; the secret protocol in the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact, allotting the Baltic states and Eastern Poland to Stalin (a Belgian Marxist *historian* denied the protocol's existence in the very week when the glasnosted Soviet authorities published its full text); the economical *successes* of Stalin and of Mao's Great Leap Forward ; the Chinese *historical* claim on Tibet as well as on some Indian territory ; and others.

What about, for instance, the rather different treatment meted out to Mahatma Gandhi in the successive editions of JNU historian Bipan Chandra's work on India's independence struggle : could it be that the change in the partyline and Moscow's increasing regard for the Mahatma, rather than new research findings, was responsible for the shift ? All this should be checked. Just a factual record, something like "*From Katyn to Ayodhya : Leftist historians' record of support for politically motivated lies*", would go a long way in undermining their totally undeserved hold over the intellectual arena.

The way they have obtained and handled their power positions also deserves some scrutiny. Take the case of the project allotted by the government to the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), about the history of the freedom struggle in 1937-47. As The Week has reported, this project was started in 1974, and should have resulted in the publication of 10 volumes by 1984. The first volume was published in 1985. It was prepared by non-Marxist dr. P.N. Chopra, and branded as *unsaleable* (though it fetched Rs. 2 Lakh in royalties) by the Marxist-dominated review committee. Chopra was hounded review committee in 1987, as too

sympathetic to Congress and not interested enough in the trade unions' involvement. He explains : *"I could not be a party to suppression of historical facts. That was why they turned against me."*

But more intriguing than the predictable fact that the Marxists were intolerant of anyone not toeing their line, is the fact that after sixteen years and Rs. 2.5 crore, only two volumes were completed (of which only one was published), and that by a non-Marxist member. According to a press report, the list of people involved in this expensive project contains the top names in secularist historiography : Prof. R.S. Sharma, first chairman of the ICHR ; dr. s. Gopal, who was in charge of the project under Prof. Sharma's tenure, and remained *"its chief editor for over a decade without producing a single line"*; Irfan Habib, AMU historian and ICHR chairman ; Prof. Bipan Chandra and Prof. K.N. Panikkar, who, with six others, were appointed in 1987 when dr. Gopal had resumed the charge of the project, with the promise to the government of finishing by 31 December 1991. The promise was not kept and the government decided to call off the whole project, in spite of Prof. Habib's reportedly high-handed attempts to get yet another extension.

This is how The Week explains this strange lack of productivity of these lavishly sponsored Communists : *"Right from the beginning, ICHR has been in the hands of Communist historians. They had more than an academic interest in the period under study (1937-47), since the Communists are accused of betraying the freedom struggle and of siding with the British during the Quit India movement. Their idea apparently was to get the project shelved so that they could bury their past, or interpret the period from the Communist angle..."*¹¹⁰ Now that the money has been wasted, it is certainly a good thing to shelve this project of publishing ten volumes of Communist history falsification. At any rate, such adventures should be investigated and given some well deserved publicity.

And then, the falsehood of the grand secularist vision of Indian history should be exposed. As a concrete starting-point, their facile way of equating the numerous cases of persecution by Muslim rulers with the handful of similar acts by Pagan rulers, should be exposed.

Thus, the way Romila Thapar equates Mahmud Ghaznavi with Harsha of Kashmir (twelfth century) as being both temple plunderers¹¹¹, can be shown up to be in gross conflict with the contemporary testimonies about the two. Of Ghaznavi, it is well-attested that he was a devout Muslim, that he refused ransom for an idol, that he deliberately committed numerous acts of sacrilege in Hindu temples with no profit whatsoever attached, and that he of course never plundered mosques. By contrast, Harsha plundered temples of his own religion, Hindu as well as Buddhist. He did not demolish them, or force Brahmins to eat beef or Buddhist monks to have sex, or any other deliberate act of sacrilege. For Harsha it was purely a matter of filling the treasury, and for Mahmud it was a matter of humiliating and destroying Paganism. This conclusion is inescapable from the contemporary reports about Harsha and Mahmud. Romila Thapar's explanation that Ghaznavi's behaviour was essentially the same as Harsha's, can only rest on an utter incompetence in reading the source material, or in a deliberate attempt to distort history.

What is more, if at all one wants to compare Harsha's behaviour with that of the Muslim rulers, one should face the connection that the contemporary historian Kalhan explicitly makes. Commenting on Harsha's temple plundering, he writes : "*Prompted by the Turks in his employ, he behaved like a Turk*". At face value, that seems to confirm the Nehruvians' equating of Harsha's and Mahmud's behaviour. Yet, the Nehruvians historians gloss over it (and we know by now that there is a system in their glossing-over), because on closer analysis, it seems that Kalhan does not make a detailed distinction between desecrating a temple by plundering it (as Harsha did), and desecrating it by more precise (and non-profit) acts of sacrilege, such as hanging a cow's tongue around an idols' neck (as Mahmud did). Kalhan is simply saying that the very idea that a temple need not be respected, was borrowed by Harsha from the Muslim Turks. These already had a well-established reputation for temple desecration, and that is a fact to which the Nehruvian historians prefer not to draw the readers' attention.

For another example, Harbans Mukhia should not be allowed to get away with his statement that "*the demolition of temples in enemy-territory was symbolic of conquest by the sultan... many Hindu rulers also did the same with temples in enemy-territory long before the Muslims had emerged as a*

political challenge", for which he gives as proof : the above-mentioned Harsha of Kashmir, and Subhatavarman (Paramara king 1193-1210) who attacked Gujarat and destroyed many Jain temples at Dabhoi and Cambay¹¹².

While the latter could be an illustration of the destruction of temples in enemy-territory (though no reason for singling out Jain temples is even attempted), he did not act this way "*long before the Muslims had emerged as a political challenge*": much of North India had freshly been conquered and thousands of temples destroyed by Ghori and Aibak. And Harsha also was already under Muslim influence, as stated explicitly in the contemporary report, and moreover, he didn't plunder in enemy-territory but in his own kingdom (an early example of the now-prevalent Hindu cowardice rallying against Hindu institutions and following the Muslim lead). So, here we have a case of a history professor who does not realize that the proofs he cites have hardly any logical connection with the thesis he proposes; or who is so assured about his *eminence* that he doesn't expect readers to notice the faulty reasoning.

From a criticism of the Nehruvians' behaviour in such case studies in religiously motivated persecution and destruction, we may then move on to the more general statements about religion as a determinant in shaping India's military, political and social history. Let us consider, for instance, the profoundly mistaken view that "*monotheism [i.e. Islam] implies equality*". Like several Alighrah historians, Harbans Mukhia has propounded this view¹¹³ in the context of explaining Islam's role as a social reform movement, giving a lead to many other secularists in academe and in the press. This view is so visibly untrue that one cannot really imagine an intellectual propounding it without some ideological compulsion overruling his intelligence.

Obviously, monotheism does not abolish the differences in the universe. The Pagan world-view was aware of the different realms of nature, the different levels of integratedness from the atoms up to the Whole, and indeed also the differences within humanity. Each phenomenon was represented by personifications of its typical characteristics, so the plurality of the cosmos was represented by a plurality of gods. Now, the postulate

that all these personifications or gods are to be forgotten and that only Allah is to be worshipped, does not make any difference for the plurality in the cosmos and in society : plants and animals are still different realms of nature, and rulers and commoners have also not merged.

In the monotheistic Jewish society, there were still kings, priests, traders, free servants and slaves. In Christianity, a stratified feudal society was sanctified by Christian theologians . The Christian concern for social action is a recent invention, made necessary by the finding that in Europe the working-class was attracted by atheist socialism, and that in Asia the strategy of first converting the elite was a total failure, so that a way to the hearts of the lower classes had to be devised.

So, there is nothing intrinsically equalitarian in monotheism. Relating the concept of equality with conceptual monotheism may be a somewhat complicated intellectual exercise which a Marxist-trained mind is not ready for, so eminent Prof. Harbans Mukhia may be forgiven this lapse. But the postulate that specifically Islam is a religion of equality, is an ideological and totally un-historical concoction. From a history professor, this cannot be accepted.

The first case of sharp inequality fostered by Islam that comes to mind, is the Islamic treatment of women. While equality in the most modern sense between men and women was never the rule anywhere, at least women used to enjoy more freedom and autonomy in most societies than they do in Islam. At this point, Muslim apologists have come up with the unbelievable contention that in tribal Arabia, it had been even worse than in Islam ; which is readily disproven by the case of Mohammed's first wife Khadija, who had inherited a trading company of which she herself was in charge, with Mohammed as her employee. The apologists' contention that polygamy under Islam was in fact a progress compared to pre-Islamic pagan society is altogether untenable. A Muslim man can have 4 wives plus X concubines : compared to what can $4+X$ be a decrease? The traditional, non-modern justification that this polygamy provided the best security to the numerous widows (who must have become especially numerous in the high-intensity warfare which Mohammed newly introduced among the Arabs)¹¹⁴, was a more reasonable explanation.

For a second example of inequality, Islam is in world history the absolute champion of slavery from European slave-traders who shipped black slaves from Africa to America, mostly bought these slaves from Arab slave-catchers. One of the first things the Belgian king Leopold II had to do in his Congo colony (though not out of any noble motive), was to defeat the Arab slave-catchers.¹¹⁵ This was as late as the end of the nineteenth century. But even today, some Muslim countries tolerate the outright practice of slavery. In 1989, reporters found out that hundreds of children belonging to the black non-Muslim Dinka tribe in Southern Sudan were being sold into slavery, after the army of the Islamic government had slaughtered their fathers. In Indian history too, many lakhs of Hindus have been sold into slavery.

Forcing Kafirs into slavery was of course a common practice. But even among Muslims, the master-slave relation existed. The only case where slavery was abolished, was where a Muslim was slave to a Kafir. Since Islam is a doctrine of domination, it could not tolerate that a Kafir lorded it over a Muslim.¹¹⁶

It is significant for the boundless arrogance which Islam inculcates in its proponents, that Islam is now being advertised as a religion of equality even among the black Africans. "*Islam is the religion for Africa*", colonel Kadhafi proclaimed in a speech in which he promised support to the South-African blacks; even when the South-African word Kaffer (*nigger*, but even more derogatory), is simply the Islamic term Kafir, which was applied to the black slaves by the Arabs and borrowed by the later European colonizers. And nobody dares to go in and remind those Africans of what the Muslim have done to them, the way the lower castes in India are continuously being fed anti-Brahmin *history*.

But the point is, while one cannot blame the Muslim propagandists for painting a rosy picture of the religion they try to sell, we now see eminent historians spreading this utterly untruthful item of propaganda, in books which are required reading in many universities. They even lecture others and call them communalists if they don't swallow these Islamic-cum-Nehruvian lies.

In another important respect, Islam is even more antithetical to equality. We will not bother about the superiority which the Arabs feel vis-a-vis the non-Arabs (as when Kadhafi lambasted some Quran interpretation by "*someone who is not even an Arab*", meaning Khomeini), nor about the inequality between Ajlaf and Ashraf (vulgar and noble), between Sheikhs and Sayyids and other such subdivisions in the Muslim community : these are just human phenomena of differentiation to which no heavy conclusions need be attached. The one crucial inequality which Islam has brought is the radical and absolute inequality between Momins and Kafirs, believers and non-believers.

This is a very central point in Islamic theology. Humanity is divided into two : the Momins are bound to go to heaven, and in the lower world should lord it over the Kafirs, and these are bound to go to hell forever, and in this world may be subjected to all kinds of injustice. For a hundredfold testimony of this persistent doctrine of absolute inequality, it suffices to check the true untailored sources of Islamic doctrine, the Quran and the Hadis. It is against those sources that the claims of Islam as a religion of equality have to be checked. The claim for Islam as a religion of equality will then stand utterly disproven, because authentic facts are more eminent than even the JNU historians.

Once the support of the Nehruvian historians to such utter falsifications of history is tackled and exposed, they have no chance of saving their reputations or even the hold of their theories over the public arena. They have gone too far in their distortions of history, so they are very vulnerable. If they have held out in the role of oft-quoted "eminent historians" for so long, it is only due to the slackness and timidity of the Hindu intellectuals.

Only because of a configuration of forces peculiar to India have the anti-Hindu historians been able to completely dominate the scene. In most free countries, they would have been exposed long ago. Take the case of veteran Leftist historian Prof. R.S. Sharma. In the Ayodhya debate, he has played a fairly prominent role, with his book *Communal History and Rama's Ayodhya*, published in December 1990, with his interviews and public statements on the matter, and with his participation for the Babri side in the VHP-BMAC discussion on the historical evidence.^{[117](#)} That he has in his

writings totally ignored the abundant documentary evidence, has not stopped the press from citing him as a great authority. But what does the international historical scene think about him ?

The Dutch historian and indologist Andre Wink writes, referring to Prof. Sharma's chief claim to fame, his book on Indian Feudalism in the early medieval period : *"R.S. Sharma's Indian Feudalism has misguided virtually all historians of the period... Sharma's thesis essentially involves an obstinate attempt to find 'elements' which fit a preconceived picture of what should have happened in India because it happened in Europe (or is alleged to have happened in Europe by Sharma and his school of historians whose knowledge of European history is rudimentary and completely outdated)... The methodological underpinnings of Sharma's work are in fact so thin that one wonders why, for so long, Sharma's colleagues have called his work 'pioneering'."*¹¹⁸ In a world where the wind of free inquiry blows, Marxist dogmas cannot hold out for long. They have been abandoned, except in those places where an artificial authority is attached to them by a partisan intelligentsia.

From his high pedestal, Prof. Sharma could afford to disregard the *"very few authors whose work effectively addresses the feudalism thesis in a critical manner"*, and he *"appears to have been in no mood to take heed of criticism levelled at his work"*. This disregarding and ignoring of counter-evidence is tactically the best way to prolong your dominant position (which is why this tactic was adopted by most secularists in the Ayodhya debate): it denies publicity and respectability to the critic's alternative thesis. But to the progress of science, this upholding of dogma and suppression of debate is detrimental. According to Prof. Wink, the effect has been this : *"Under the impact of the feudalism thesis the historiography of the period is still in utter disarray."*

On the Ayodhya issue too, popular and governmental perception has been brought into *utter disarray* by the concerted efforts of a small but powerful group of committed Hindu-baiters, including the same Prof. R.S. Sharma, who have hammered into the public consciousness a suspicion against the well-attested facts of the matter. With all their eminence and authority, they actually managed to turn facts into *myth* and *concoction*. But as you can see

from the comment of a competent outsider, the authority which these Hindu-baiters enjoy, is highly undeserved and based on something else than scholarly merit.

So, in my opinion, the dominance of these Nehruvian and other Hindu-baiters need not last much longer. Their eminence will go down as soon as the debunking of their central myths has come centre-stage in the intellectual arena (which means that an issue-centered critique will suffice to do most of the job). And that can go unexpectedly fast, there are plenty of occasions at which the readers are interested enough to pick up an alternative thesis, if only it gets competently presented to them.

For a promising example, Meenakshi Jain has done an admirable job of debunking a number of cherished misconceptions (consciously spread in the colonial and missionary interests) concerning the caste system, as part of a debate in Indian Express triggered by the Mandal Report.^{[119](#)} While casteist politicians will go on for some time to use these misconceptions in their rhetoric, the intellectual questioning of the (widely prevalent) anti-Brahmin and anti-Hindu casteist view of Indian history has started, and it is bound to affect every caste-related debate soon.^{[120](#)}

Another recent myth which is easy to debunk on the strength of the authentic texts, is that Buddhism and Jainism were social reform movements and reactions against Brahminism. Buddha and Mahavira were religious critics of the ritualism of some Brahmins which had degenerated to mere form, with the spirit lacking (which is a very ordinary development in traditions and societies after some time). But they didn't claim to bring anything new, they merely restored the spirit which some Brahmins had become too uninspired to uphold. Buddha is quite explicit about merely walking the same path as all the Awakened ones before and after him, entirely in the sanatana spirit. Both *Buddha* (Awakened one) and *Mahavira* (Great Hero of self-conquest) were long-established titles before Gautama and Vardhamana came to carry them. Both revivers of Vedic spirituality were positively uninterested in social reform. While Brahmins played a role in society and codified social order in Dharma Shastras, these Shramanas (monks) concentrated entirely on Moksha, liberation of consciousness, and

they considered worldly concerns, such as social reform, as foolish waste.^{[121](#)}

Once this Marxist-inspired myth of Buddhism and Jainism as social reform movements gets debunked, the authority of those who publicly identify with this myth will also be questioned. The same counts for other such myths, artificially created by politically motivated people : once the myth goes its proponents lose their aura of authority. While a scrutiny of the individual record of the big-mouth secularists may be useful as long as this debate remains as nasty as it is now, it is the issue- centered criticism which will blow the secularists' authority away very soon.

The myth of Brahmin oppression, the myth of Buddhism as a social reform movement, the myth of the Buddhist-Brahmin power struggle, the myth of the economical motives for the Muslim conquests and destruction, the myth of the non-existence of an indigenous and nation-wide Hindu culture, the myth of the social reforms brought by Islam, the myth of Hindu-Muslim amity, the myth of Nehru and of India as a *a nation in the making*, the myth of the Composite Culture, the myth that communalism is a British creation, all these myths are bound to give way once a substantial number of Hindu intellectuals apply their minds to them in a serious and scientific way, and then use the available channels to speak out.

Chapter 9. Secularism and India's Integrity

9.1 Separatism and anti-Hinduism

In the present context, the link between history-writing and actual politics is extra-ordinarily strong. Witness the crucial role of the Aryan invasions theory in the secularist and casteist/Ambedkarist ideologies, as earlier in the missionary and colonial ideologies. In fact, I can not think of any situation in world history where history-writing was so intertwined with both long-term political philosophy and short-term political equations. This is partly because an unusually large chunk of India's history is fundamentally under debate, either because it has not yet been mapped (so many unknowns may be decided on overnight once the Indus script is conclusively deciphered), or because it has been questioned for ideological reasons even while well-established (like the denial of Islam's utterly destructive role). Nowhere else can so much be read into history according to one's ideological compulsions, because nowhere else is so much history so undecided and disputed.

This link between the two, history and politics, works in both directions. Secularism as a political philosophy is intellectually dependent upon the secularist version of history. Conversely, once secularism as the official state ideology is fully discredited, secularist history-writing cannot survive for long. Now in fact, Nehruvian secularism as a political philosophy has effectively lost its credibility. It has proven worthless as a national motivating force and as a moral framework, judging by the many forms of corruption at every level. It has proven unable to create a secular national unity (*Bharatiyatva*, *Indian-ness*). Secularists go on lambasting the Ram devotees that with their Janmabhoomi demand they cannot expect the minorities to remain in India, that they are driving the minorities to separatism. This contention unfortunately draws an objective outsider's attention to the fact that these minority separatisms are already there.

There are Muslim, Sikh, Communist and Christian separatist movements who carry on an armed struggle against the Indian secular republic. The Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu has, after the Chinese invasion in 1962, decided to limit itself to demands within the Constitution, and to drop its separatism ; however, with the DMK talking of the need to go *back to the roots*, and depending on the outcome for the Tamils in Sri Lanka, it might reassert its separatist tendencies. It is significant that it was Annadurai, the least anti-Hindu among the Dravidian leaders (he supported the RSS in putting up the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, against the Christians) who called off the separatist programme.

There are also Dalit fringe groups who demand a separate Dalitastan or Achhootistan. Some of these groups are militantly atheist (like the Dravidian movement), some are Christian-or Muslim-leaning, some profess Buddhism of the Ambedkarite variety. The one thing that all these separatist movements without exception have in common at the ideological level, is their hatred of Hinduism. Every separatist movement in India is an anti-Hindu movement.

In fact, as I write this, the papers report on pamphlets being spread among the tribals in Gujarat, demanding for a separate tribal state Bhilistan, as well as for five more tribal states in other parts of India. And what is the punch line in the pamphlet ? Exactly : "*We are not Hindus*". Of course, the number of tribals rallied behind this demand may not exceed a handful, but the point that separatism in India invariably implies anti-Hinduism is certainly corroborated.

The Hindus may profess secularism as much as they want : for their enemies they are still too Hindu. And their enemies will try to separate from them from the very day they feel strong enough to do it, in order to create a Pakistan, a Khalistan etc. Secularism, which is purely a negative ideology, which merely divorces one of the strongest motivating forces in an individual's life from public life, is proving incapable of overcoming these separatisms.

I am not saying that all minorities ipso facto harbour separatist tendencies and will invariably launch a separatist movement if strategically given a chance. The Parsis or the Jains are not going to start their own Khalistan

agitation, I am sure. The ordinary members of the Christian community, everywhere where it is living mixed with other communities (i.e. except in parts of the Northeast), have a constructive attitude and are, as far as I can see, increasingly being absorbed into the *mainstream*. Among the Sikhs too, the separatist movement can still not claim a majority of the community as supporters of the Khalistan cause. And among the Muslims, it is only in Kashmir that they massively support separation from India. I have to agree with the remark of some secularist, that the Muslims who stayed behind in India in 1947, in a sense "*voted for India with their feet*". All I am saying is that those who are bent on creating a separate communal state, will want to do so regardless of whether the Hindus call themselves Hindu or secular.

Therefore, V.P. Singh missed the point when he declared on Doordarshan (with an explicitness that bordered on incitement) that, if the Hindus claimed the Ram Janmabhoomi, there was no ground for stopping the Sikhs from demanding Khalistan, and other such separatist demands. The separatists have not waited until the Hindu mobilization for Ram Janmabhoomi to start their anti- India movement ;nor will they call it off if the Hindus call off the Janmabhoomi campaign.

9.2 Secularist-separatist nexus

The nexus between the anti-Janmabhoomi demand and anti- Hindu separatism, has been worked out more closely by Tavleen Singh in her article *Apocalypse Soon*.^{[122](#)} Let us take a close look at her analysis and prediction. She starts out by mentioning the opinion, fairly common in Pakistan, that India should be partitioned once more, and a big chunk of the North given to the India Muslims. Since Ayodhya, she thinks that this prospect has acquired a grim chance of materialization. After all, the VHP Hindus have become so fanatical that they think : "*We will have to get rid of these Muslims. They must be kicked out and sent to Pakistan, after all it was made for them.*" So, on the Hindu side, we have strong words.

On the Muslim side, according to Tavleen Singh, the radicalization has already gone a big step further. Just a week before, the Muslim Personal Law Board has issued a religious sanction to fight, if necessary, for the

Babri Masjid. *"All God-fearing Muslims will consider it their religious duty to participate in the new jihad. This would lead automatically to the internationalizing of the dispute... If the mosque is knocked down, [not only Pakistan but] many an oil-fat Arab country would be only too willing to come to the defense of the faith."*

What is our secularist commentator implying ? That India should let its policy on Ayodhya be sidetracked at the Muslim countries' gunpoint ? Politically, it is a concession (i.e. a reward and an encouragement) to threats of coercion and aggression, if the Ayodhya or Kashmir policies are made dependent on the assent of mujahedin either inside India or in the Muslim countries. Strategically however, it is very useful and timely, that an unsuspected secularist points to the danger of jihad. While Hindus would be politically justified in ignoring such undemocratic and terrorist threats, in terms of strategy they should think twice before provoking a reaction for which they are not prepared.

When the Shilanyas ceremony took place, thirty-five Muslim countries have protested. At that time, there was no call for jihad. If we add pan-Islamic solidarity to the call for jihad, then India is in for some serious trouble. However, at the time of writing, no Islamic country has voiced any threat against India. So far it is only the secularists who have tried to intimidate the Ram Mandir campaigners with threats of international Muslim retaliation.

As part of the same effort, they have also been accusing the Ram activists of endangering the safety of the Hindus in Muslim countries. This effectively means that, in the secularists' perception, those minority Hindus are really hostages, and the secularists are supporting the anti-Janmabhoomi demands of the hostage-takers, the Muslim majorities in Pakistan, Bangla Desh, Malaysia. *"Be good, otherwise something very unpleasant will happen"*, so the secularists say, repeating the canonical line of hostage-takers.

Even if those countries with Hindu minorities are Islamic republics, they still have laws against looting, arson, temple- destruction, and rape and slaughter of citizens even if these belong to the minorities. Moreover, India has treaties with Pakistan (inherited also by its partial successor state

Bangla Desh) concerning the safety of the minorities. As for actual jihad from Muslim countries against India, there are international treaties (as well as Nehru's famous "*five principles of peaceful co-existence*", accepted by the Non-Aligned Movement to which many Muslim countries belong) prescribing respect for a nation's sovereignty, and guaranteeing non-interference in internal affairs, and non-aggression. All these safeguards against aggression on Hindus and India are a juridical reality.

However, in the present discourse, our secularists have exchanged these realities belonging to the level of Right, for the logic of brute Power. They choose to treat the situation not in juridical but in strategic terms. Maybe they are right. But then it implies that "*the friendship with the Arab countries that Nehru so wisely built*", which in the spring of 1990 had seemed to hold out against Pakistan's attempt to rally support for its claim on Kashmir, is not resistant even to the Ayodhya affair, i.e. the relocation of one non-mosque. What kind of *friendship* is this, where a sovereign act can get punished with jihad ? To say the least, this is not a tribute to Nehru's international legacy by his otherwise devout followers.

This jihad will also (if not primarily) come from inside India : "*Even on a domestic level, there are likely to be serious problems. So far, we have been spared Muslim terrorist groups, at least outside Kashmir, but for how long ?*" Tavleen Singh even quotes a Muslim leader saying : "*Once Muslims feel that the state is not going to protect them and they are on their own, it is only a question of time before they start doing what the Sikhs are doing in Punjab. As it is, when we visit a town after a communal riot, people say : if the police wasn't there, we could take the Hindus on.*"

It is an interesting though experiment, what Tavleen Singh presents here. Some people will say that already the riots are mostly started by Muslims and that they too are a form of terror. Even if that is true, there is still an essential difference with a real terrorist campaign : there is no well-defined and persistent demand animating each of those separate instances of violence. What would the explicit objective be around which an all-India Muslim terrorist campaign would rally ? Does she really think that this miserable non-mosque is a sufficient occasion to get such a terrorist campaign going ?

Then Tavleen Singh assesses the Sikh reaction. In Amritsar, she talked to a lot of Sikh *militant* leaders, who *almost all of them* brought up the Ayodhya issue. Incidentally, I know decent anti-fanatical Sikhs who would get killed if they went near Tavleen's militant friends, merely because they call terrorists by their proper name. In November 1990, the Sikh terrorists have issued orders to the press, one of these being that no negative terms like *terrorist* can be applied to them.^{[123](#)} It struck me that most secularists in the press are not affected by the death threats issued to journalists who don't fall in line, because they already use the terrorist-friendly (or at least neutral) language. It does not in the least surprise me that Tavleen Singh is on such good terms with the *militants*. After all, the main plank in the separatist and the secularist platforms is the same : *We are not Hindus*.

So, the militants told her that "*they felt now that the struggle for Khalistan was entirely justified because if the minorities in India could not even be ensured protection for their places of worship then Indian secularism is nothing but a lie*". This statement calls for some serious comment.

Let me point out first of all that no place of worship of any minority is threatened by the building of the Ram Mandir. The place has already been a functioning Hindu temple since 1949. If at that time it was a functioning mosque (which is very doubtful, see [ch.4.1.](#)), then a minority place of worship was not properly protected at that time, in 1949, the glory years of Jawaharlal Nehru. But now that it is a Hindu temple of long standing, the whole affair really concerns a simple architectural reform entirely internal to the Hindu community. It is the fault of press people like Tavleen Singh, that people inside and outside India have come to believe that a mosque is threatened.

As the Chinese philosopher Confucius has pointed out, we can only begin to set the world in order, if we call things by their proper names. This whole Ayodhya problem would not have existed if secularist politicians and intellectuals had called the disputed building a non- mosque and an effective Hindu temple. Because that is what it is : a building containing idols is by definition not a mosque, and a building not used for namaz is in

effect not a mosque. But a building where Hindus come to worship idols, is called a temple or Mandir.

But now the damage has been done. With their false language, the secularists have convinced crores of people that the Ayodhya dispute is a struggle between majority Mandir and minority Masjid. So, the *militants* think that the minorities are under threat.

The second damage that has been done, with full co- operation of the secularists, is that the status of Sikhism as a separate religion has become firmly established in the minds of many Sikhs. This separate status is entirely a British fabrication, later amplified by Sikh who, like many Hindus, had come to think that being a Hindu is a shameful thing. The Sikhs have always been one of Hinduism's many panths (sects). The claim to being a separate religion, which is now being propped up in many anti-Hindu books, has been conclusively disposed of by Rajendra Singh Nirala, an ex-granthi who came to realize that what the Akalis told him was not the same as what he used to recite from the Granth.^{[124](#)}

Nonetheless, it is the secularists, including Khushwant Singh (the *dirty old man* of Indian secularism), who have been championing the Sikhs' right to preserve their communal identity.^{[125](#)} As if any Hindu has challenged that right or even just asked them to drop their distinctive ways : it is not Hindu pressure, but the impact of modernity that was making Sikhs shed those outer emblems that constitute their distinctness. It is again the secularists who, with their anti-Hindu propensities have laid the blame for Sikh separatism at the door of those Hindus who restate the demonstrable historical truth that Sikhs are nothing but a Hindu sect. *Assimilative communalism*, they call it. When Hindu historians point out the radical and irreducible difference between Hinduism and the closed monotheistic creeds like Islam, they are dubbed *communalists*; but when the same people point out the radical sameness of Sikhism and other varieties of Hinduism, then for that they are again dubbed *communalists*.

Anyway, the situation today is that the armed *representatives* of the Sikh community (remark that Tavleen Singh only quotes *militant* Sikhs : in the strategic assessment they are indeed the ones who count) consider

themselves a separate non-Hindu minority, and identify with the Muslim communalist viewpoint on Ayodhya. They don't want to see anymore how many times the name Ram is reverentially mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib¹²⁶, and what horror Guru Nanak has expressed at Babar's Islamic acts of mass slaughter. However, it is yet something else to suggest (as they seem to do) a causal relation between the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and the fact that *"they felt now that the struggle for Khalistan was entirely justified"*.

The contention that the Ayodhya events could add one percent to their 100% dedication to the Khalistan cause, is nothing but rhetoric. If the Hindus give up their Ram Mandir, the Khalistani terrorists will not fire one bullet less, let alone give up their demand for Khalistan. Before the Ram Mandir became hot news, they already felt *justified* in killing dozens of people every week, for Khalistan. Postulating a causal link between Ram Janmabhoomi and Khalistani terrorism, is just a ploy to lay the blame for their communalist crimes at someone else's door. And of course, the secularists, from V.P. Singh to Tavleen Singh, rhetorically support them in their ploy.

9.3 Victory through more concessions ?

Passing the buck from the machinegun-wielding communalists in the Khalistani camp, to the Ram campaigners with their tridents and Ram hymns, Tavleen Singh writes : *"Ironic, isn't it, that those who believe that Ayodhya has become the symbol of Indian nationalism and that Hindutva is virtually synonymous with patriotism, could well be responsible for dividing the country once more."* Ironic, isn't it, that those who lecture others on being responsible for dividing the country, and who declare that secularism is virtually synonymous with patriotism, are effectively giving the armed separatists a good conscience by putting the blame for their communalist crimes on people who merely want to renovate their own Ram temple.

By now, the reader should understand fully why Tavleen Singh is such a welcome guest in *militant* circles. The Khalistani terrorists say : If you can have your Ram Mandir, we must have our Khalistan. And Tavleen Singh

says : If you really want your Ram Mandir, you should be ready for Khalistan. The terrorists don't talk in terms of rights, but in military power terms (*"facing the consequences"*). Tavleen Singh helps us think about the matter in those same terms.

Tavleen Singh's pious advice to the Janmabhoomi activists is this : *"A temple built beside the mosque would be a far more powerful symbol of Indian nationalism than a temple built in place of a mosque."* Well how utterly ignorant. In the 18th and 19th century, the Hindus worshipped Ram on a platform just next to the Babri Masjid. That didn't stop the Muslims from attacking the nearby Hanumangarhi temple in 1855. The Hindus accommodated themselves with the mosques that replaced the Hindu temples in Mathura and Varanasi, by building a temple next to them : that didn't stop the Muslim League from creating Pakistan and committing countless atrocities on the Hindus. When in 1905 the Akalis threw out the *"Hindu"* idols from their Gurudwara, Pandit M.M. Malaviya refrained from even protesting, and built a new idol temple next to it. That didn't stop the Akalis from developing into a separatist movement.

So, one more Hindu concession, viz. building the new temple next to the existing structure, is certainly not a *"powerful"* symbol. It may be nice, it may be harmless, but it is by no means powerful. India is full of examples (not mere symbols) of Hindu accommodation, but that has not stopped the separatist movements from multiplying and hardening their demands. The Indian Constitution is a mighty case of Hindu accommodation to some minorities' demands for privileges, but that hasn't stopped the Khalistanis from burning it, nor has it stopped the Babri Masjid movement from calling for a boycott of Republic Day 1987.

If the Muslims would finally take their turn at making concessions, and agree to let the Hindus build their Mandir, and then build their own Masjid next to it, that would indeed be a powerful symbol of Indian nationalism.

But Tavleen Singh is fooling someone if she thinks that yet another Hindu concession is going to mollify any armed separatist.^{[127](#)} Such people have only respect for strength. In fact, even ordinary people have more respect for strength than for pliability. All these cries of *"We are not Hindus"*, which are mostly coupled with separatist demands, are partly the

result of the over-all image of weakness which Hinduism has continued to acquire during the last few centuries. Nobody wants to belong to such a weak community with so little self- respect. The day Hinduism shows strength, all these separatists will proudly declare : "*We are Hindus*". They will even shout at each other: "*We are better Hindus than you*".

Summing up, we must thank Tavleen Singh for not pontificating about secular principles, and for rightly pointing out that this is fast becoming a matter of strength more than of principles. Guns are pointed at India, or rather at Hindu India, and if Hindus don't behave nicely, they will *justify* Khalistani terrorism and *provoke* Muslim terrorism, and then "*we need to be prepared to deal with the spread of the AK-47 on an undreamed-of scale*".

What does this state of affairs have to say about four decades of secularism ? Apparently, something has gone wrong. Let us take a closer look at that peculiarly Indian variety of secularism. We need to plunge deep into fundamentals and initiate a thorough diagnosis, because this patient is gravely ill.

Chapter 10. Secularism as It Is

10.1. Its definition

To start with the beginning, Indian secularism was borrowed from Europe. There, secularism meant that society took the freedom to organize itself without caring about the dogmas of the Churches. At the intellectual level, it meant that thinkers took the freedom to independently formulate insights regardless of their conformity with Church teachings. This included the freedom to frontally criticize these Church teachings.

In the modern times when it became a political term, secularism meant basically : freedom from religion. But then it did not mean a state-enforced *freedom* from religion. It was not totalitarianism, the freedom of the authorities to meddle in people's intimate beliefs or commitments. Freedom means having the options to take something or to leave it. The communist effort to weed out religion has never gone by the name of secularism, it was called totalitarianism.

So, secularism rather means freedom regarding religion : the freedom to take it or to leave it (freedom without a choice between alternatives is hardly freedom). By guaranteeing this freedom, secularism subjects the adherence or submission to the tenets of a religion to individual choice. Secularism recognizes the logical priority of the individual's choice to follow a religion, to this religion's actual claim on the individual's adherence.

By placing the free choice of the individual above the duties or dogmas imposed by religion, secularism has done enough to emancipate man from religion. Man can choose a religious view or commitment rather than having it imposed on him. In that sense, secularism does not mean anti-religious activism. It only means subjecting religion to human choice, which was revolutionary enough in the European context of Church power trying to impose itself.

Since the individual's freedom of choice regarding religion or Weltanschauung was made the norm, the state authority was bound to neutrality in these matters. Imposing any view of the ultimate, including atheism, was precisely what the state was prevented from doing by secularism. Yet, some Marxists in India have called this simple concept of state neutrality regarding religion a *non-modern* concept of secularism. They think the state should actively campaign against religion.^{[128](#)}

If any concept of secularism is *non-modern*, it is the feudal concept that the people are not capable of thinking for themselves, and that a priesthood should be empowered to drill the new world view (such as atheism) into them and to persecute and otherwise fight any alternative views. What is modern, what is the essence of modernity, is not the belief that a certain belief system should be imposed on the people by the state ; on the contrary, it is the confidence in human freedom, in free exploration, in man's capability of learning for himself from his own experience.

So, secularism as a political term means : neutrality of the government in religious matters. That is all. Secularism does not mean that the state promotes one belief system, it means that the state limits itself to guaranteeing the individual's freedom to find out about these matters for himself. That at least is the correct meaning of the term "*secularism*" as it has historically developed in the West, in a period when individual freedom was considered the topmost value. If one chooses secularism as a component for a state system, it remains to be seen how this fundamental concept is worked out in the details of a secular Constitution, but that state neutrality and respect for the individual's intellectual and religious freedom should be the spirit of such a Constitution, is certain.

About the origin of the term, this much should be known. The Latin word saeculum, exactly like the Hebrew word olam (Arabic alam), means : time cycle, eternity, era, world. From *era*, the more common meaning *century* is derived. For Sanskrit equivalents, one would think of kalpa, and of samsara. As a synonym for secular, the word temporal is sometimes used ; as its antonym, spiritual or eternal. These terms have entered the modern languages mostly via Church parlance.

Originally, "*secular*" as a political term does not imply non-religion, or freedom from religion, or any specific attitude to religion whatsoever. In fact, the source of the term's political meaning is a case of Church terminology. Among priests, regular priests are rule-bound, i.e. monastic, and fully dedicated to spiritual life, while secular priests are worldly i.e. involved in world-oriented or *temporal* duties, especially as parish priest. Both are religious, but regulars have a spirit-oriented and seculars a world-oriented life.^{[129](#)}

In its acquired political meaning, secularism, being a doctrine concerning the state, leaves any spirit-oriented choices to the individual, and limits the state to pursuing world-oriented objectives. Secularism does not limit the individual who is left free to pursue religion, with the state guaranteeing this freedom. Secularism limits the state, and prevents it from espousing other causes than its worldly functions. Secularism limits the state's authority over the individual to the latter's behaviour, and refuses it access to his mind.^{[130](#)}

In a larger context of civilizational philosophy, we may criticize the essentially individualistic character of this historically developed, visibly European secularism. But for the time being, if at all one wants to practice secularism, I think this is the sane and genuine variety, as opposed to the existing alternative, the totalitarian attempts to weed out religion from people's minds and private lives.

Dictatorship is an unrestricted (as opposed to a restricted, esp. by democratic feedback) claim on people's lives. Totalitarianism is stronger, it is a claim on people's minds. The demand voiced by a section of the Indian *secularists*, that the state be used in order to spread atheism, is the product of a totalitarian mentality. It is moreover a clear aberration of the modern concept of secularism as it has historically taken shape in Europe. So to the extent that there is no conceptual apparatus outside the *modern* Europe-originated thought categories, secularism should be defended in its genuine European sense, against the Stalinist perversion of *secularism* that still has quite a following in India.

10.2 Hindu secularism

Concerning secularism, there is however another discussion going on : is it true that Hindu culture is intrinsically secular?^{[131](#)} Not only many Hindu leaders, even Javed Habib, one of the BMAC leaders, is no record as saying : *"India has survived as a secular nation because the majority is Hindu."*^{[132](#)} And is there not within Hindu tradition an alternative, if not superior or more adapted, type of secularism?

When we say that secularism is in a sense a very individual-centered doctrine, we must realize that that is not a very alien thing to Hindu culture. While Hindu culture historically has its basis in a strong community structure, with joint family, gotra, jati, varna, as grades of integration between the individual and society as a whole, in matters of religion it has always been individualistic. There is no regular group gathering in temples prescribed in Hindu tradition. Of course, there are social rituals surrounding life events like marriage and cremation, and religious festivals, and for these the community congregates. But the innermost and actually religious level of Hindu culture is an individual affair. And it could not have been otherwise. Action and ritual may be community affairs, but the basis of real religion is a culture of consciousness, and consciousness is individual.

In Islam and Christianity, any concept of consciousness culture is very marginal. Of course, when saying prayers with genuine intent, people are in fact practicing a kind of bhakti yoga. These Pagan elements that treat religion as a matter of individual mental experience, are unavoidable and in fact indispensable in any religion, because they spring from man's intrinsic religious instinct.

In Christianity these elements of a culture of inner life have sometimes appeared, but the stray occasions of Christian *mysticism* have never developed into a systematized tradition, because the Church opposed it. The Church correctly saw in this culture of consciousness an implicit Pagan doctrine of liberation from ignorance through meditation, contrary to the Christian doctrine of salvation from sin through Christ.

Islam too knows of consciousness culture only through the Pagan infusion of Sufism. Doctors of Islam like Al- Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah correctly rejected mysticism as unfounded in the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet : these don't teach any technique of access of the individual to a spiritual reality, but on the contrary claim for the Prophet a sole and final intercessory status between God and man. All that Islam wants its followers to do, is to perform certain actions (saying prayers, giving alms, participating in jihad), it does not at all focus on any culture or exploration of individual consciousness.

In Hindu culture, even in its most unsophisticated popular forms, this focus on individual consciousness is always there. No group prayers, one's religious experience is one's personal affair. Therefore, the concept of leaving religion to the care of the individual, with no authority above him empowered to dictate beliefs or religious practices, which in the West constituted a cultural revolution called secularism, is nothing new to Hindu culture.

This is not an idealization but a firm reality : no matter what the "*evils of Hindu society*" may have been, subjecting the individual's freedom of religion to any public authority is not one of them. No wonder that Voltaire, who strongly opposed the Church's totalitarian grip over men's lives, and may count as one of the ideologues of secularism, mentioned the religions of India and China as a model of how religion could be a free exploration by the individual.

So, religion is a personal affair. The Hindu state has no right to forbid or promote any religious doctrine (the way Ashok, the hero of the Nehruvians, is said to have promoted Buddhism). And religious organizations have no say in political decision-making.

10.3. Marxism and secularism

Marxists reject as *non-modern* the Gandhian conception of secularism as "*equal respect for all religions*" (about which, see [ch.10.6](#)). And they defy Mahatma Gandhi where he said that secularism should mean "*equal*

respect, not equal disrespect, for all religions". The Leftists' version of secularism quite certainly intends "equal disrespect for all religions".

Indian Leftist intellectuals (I am not aware of the existence of leftist proletarians in India) do advocate a deliberate policy of eradicating religion from the people's consciousness. You do not hear a lot of this long-term project, but occasionally yet another *Platform for Secularism* (or Action Committee, or People's Rally, etc., for Secularism) is set up, and then they announce their demand that religious TV programmes be banned, that any presence of religious symbols or texts at state functions be banned, that use of state buildings for any religious event be banned, that religious education be banned from schools set up to impart secular education, etc. Since Marxists dismiss freedom as a bourgeois- liberalist illusion, they don't feel inhibited in making bans and suppression their central demands.

Of course, the Marxist programme of using state power to eradicate religion is, in the countries where it has been practiced, a memory [133](#) of horror as well as an outrageous failure. It is totally objectionable and we will not waste any more paper on it. However, we do have to deal with the rationale for this intention, which gives them a good conscience in advocating an all-out government campaign against religion.

The Marxists start from Marx' perception that religion is an anti-rational superstition from the primitive age, and an *opium of the people* which prevents men from living in reality and emancipating themselves.

Let us start with the opium part. It is quite correct that religion, like drug-taking, is practiced in order to have a certain mental experience. And it is a fact that people spend a lot of time and money on arranging for such mental experiences. A missionary told me that he has a very hard time to extract from the villagers one Rupee per month for the upkeep of the village well, but when someone comes from the city with a video-set and some films, they can all take out five Rupees to spend a Sunday watching films. A mental kick is worth a lot more to people than the necessities of humdrum existence. That is why people can spend vast sums on a Durga Puja or some such religious festival, only to throw the Murti into the river at the end of the festival.

But the difference is that religion, in its best sense, is not a benumbing drug. Religious consciousness is not amnesia, forgetfulness.¹³⁴ It is quite the opposite, it is an awakening. In its more profound dimension, it is an awakening to the inner reality. In its more outward dimension, the festivals and rituals, it is an awakening to and a celebration of the world's time-cycles and life-cycles, an explicitation of participation in the world order (the Vedic concept of Rta). It is a very successful and time-tested way of giving colour and meaning to our existence. It breaks through the grey and prosaic life that the Communists want to impose on us.

But the Marxists think that religion is an evil, because it is anti-reason ; while reason is a good in itself, which moreover emancipates man by equipping him with the intellectual as well as technological means to determine his own destiny. Now this notion of reason and religion stems from a specifically European situation, that conditioned Marx' thought about religion. The fact that Indian Marxists have simply transposed Marx' limited view to the Indian situation is just another example of how dogmatic Marxists generally are. It also shows how utterly ignorant the Indian Leftist (and generally secularist) intelligentsia is of India's home-grown religious culture.

"Know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." That is what Saint Paul said, borrowing it from many Pagans before him. It was an injunction to practice religion. And yet, it could be the motto of Reason.¹³⁵ What Saint Paul meant with this dictum is a different chapter, but fact is that Pagan religions saw themselves as a culture of truth, as an exploration, as an experience, not at all as a belief in a set of dogmas.

By the time Marx was writing, the dominant religion taught man something very different from seeking out the truth for himself. The Protestants (to which Marx' family formally belonged) as well as the Jews (of whom Marx' father used to be one, before conversion for careerist reasons) extracted their doctrines from Scripture. Reason was to be used in interpreting Scripture, but it was not radical and autonomous. The Catholics paid much less attention to Scripture, but were subject to Church tradition and the doctrinal authority of the Holy See ; Catholic philosophy was equally barred from being a radical and autonomous exploration by Reason.

It is a Christian curiosity that *religion* connotes authoritative Church teaching, or Scripture teaching, and therefore implies *belief*. That is why, in the European Enlightenment context, the dichotomy secular/non-secular has come to connote rational/non-rational, or reason/belief. For instance, *secular morality* is usually taken to mean "*morality not based on scriptural belief, but rationally founded in the human experience*". However, it must be stressed that this connotation of secular/non-secular with reason/belief results from a Christian peculiarity, viz. the appropriation of the entire spiritual as well as ethical domain by the Church, sole guardian of Salvation.

A second typical element that made religion as Marx knew it, into an *opium*, was this notion of the Hereafter. While many cultures have believed in a life after death, some even in an eternal such life, it is typical for Christianity (as opposed to even Judaism) that this afterlife was treated as the hour of truth, as the life that really matters, and of which the quality depends on your conduct (sometimes taken to mean passive acceptance of your position and obedience to the worldly authorities) in this finite time in the lower world.

So, in order to bring man back to the verifiable reality of this life, and in order to make him fully use and explore reason, the belief in infallible Church dogma or in infallible Revealed Scripture had to be abolished. Since no religion was known to Marx except the anti-rational belief systems based on Revelation and Dogma, the struggle for Reason and against belief in Dogma and Revelation, seemingly became a struggle against religion. In that context, secularism could be seen as more than a separation of politics and religion, not as the best way of letting the two domains flourish on their own terms, but as an offensive of anti-religious reason against anti-rational beliefs. The secularization of the state was then not seen as the full realization of the desired separation of politics and religion but only as a step in an ongoing offensive against religion: from a full control of religion, via a secularized state, to a full destruction of religion even in the private sphere. If religion is an evil, why stop at chasing it from the public domain ? It should be destroyed altogether.

To restore the term secularism to its fundamental meaning, we have to take it out of this peculiar perception determined by the European context. And we hasten to add that while secularism is an established and unchallenged value in European culture today, the perception that religion as such is an evil, is limited to certain ideological groups, and by no means considered an integral part of secularism. Christians, among them the dominant Christian-Democratic parties, have fully accepted secularism as a state doctrine. This is of course due to the influence which humanism has had on modern Christianity. Hardly any Christian today believes he should impose his doctrines on others through state power.

10.4. Real secularism through real religion

Secularism is fundamentally not a matter of reason versus belief. Because religion is not intrinsically a matter of belief. The demand that you believe that Jesus was the Saviour from original sin, and that He was resurrected, and that He was God's only-begotten Son, or the demand that you believe that Mohammed was Allah's final spokesman and that the Quran is Allah's own word : these claims on human assent and belief, even though they have grabbed a major part of the world, and even though they have become synonymous with religion in the minds of many millions, are a caricature of religion.

In the vast majority of religions that have existed in humanity's history, beliefs were never a defining element. Of course, people had their beliefs. But that did not put them either inside or outside the community. Religion was not so much a matter of doctrine (which in turn should not be reduced to belief), but of practice. There is on the one hand the exploration of consciousness, which as such was mostly limited to a class of adepts. This could involve an unsystematic seeking of visions, as by taking hallucinogenic drugs, or it could be developed into a systematic discipline. This was all a matter for experience, not for dogma. There is on the other the outward aspect of religion, ritual. What our modernists decry as *empty ritual* was not so empty at all. It was a very effective way to order life, celebrate the cosmic cycles, and consecrate the community.

As dr. Schipper, the Dutch sinologist and practicing Taoist priest, has stressed, ritual is not a symbolic representation of a specific doctrine.¹³⁶ Of course, philosophically-minded practitioners may choose to shape ritual so as to physically reflect certain cosmological conceptions. But that is not the point of ritual. By far the most people in world history who have participated in rituals, had little idea of any cosmological or otherwise doctrinal content of the ritual, and yet it performed its function impeccably. A new religious movement, back in the old days, meant not a new doctrine, but a new ritual.

So, treating religion as a hotchpotch of beliefs that have no place in a reason-oriented society, that should therefore be thrown out of the public arena, and ultimately also chased out of the private sphere, is based on a crude identification of religion with the crude belief systems of Christianity and Islam. It is only when we discard these narrow ideas about religion, when we broaden and deepen this understanding of religion, to encompass more rational and humanist religions than those two which happen to have conquered the world, that we can have a correct understanding of secularism. It is their utterly superficial notion of religion that has made the secularists devise such a crude and despotic kind of *secularism*.

But are there then no objectively negative and harmful beliefs which a secular state should actively endeavor to weed out ? It is a fact that in the lower stretches of religion, which is a much-encompassing human phenomenon, you find very base superstitions and practices (like witchcraft, but I add that this meaning of the term does injustice to the historical witches, women who had kept a lot of pre-Christian lore alive, and were consequently blackened in Christian preaching and writing, and burned at the stake). Where such things come in conflict with public morality, health and the law of the land, the state has to intervene on purely secular grounds. But when it comes to "*weeding out superstitions*" from people's minds, then the secular state has to stand aside and leave it to educators in the broadest sense of the term to transform popular consciousness.

Thus, I don't believe the Indian state should wage a campaign against superstitions like the belief that the Creator of the universe has spoken through a prophet, or the belief that a section of humanity has a God-given

right to lord it over the unbelievers, or the belief that there is merit in attacking the unbelievers that their religious practices. Even if these beliefs have terrible consequences in the secular field, like Partitions and riots, it is not the duty of the state to campaign against them.

Such superstitions which are in flagrant conflict with scientific universalism, should be dealt with by intellectuals, and the state will have done more than its share if it does not impede the broadcasting of their criticism of these superstitions. The state should just refrain from banning books even though they *hurt the feelings* of those steeped in the said superstitions. It should refrain from pressurizing or boycotting or prosecuting people who perform their legitimate task of educating people concerning such superstitions. It should refrain from imposing history-distortions on schoolbooks, i.e. from concealing the truth about the evil effects of such superstitions. (That the Indian state is so far not secular enough to refrain from this sabotage of the intellectual struggle against superstition, is shown in [ch. 12](#))

10.5 Secularism and Chaturvarnya

The doctrine that the realm of thought and the realm of power have to be scrupulously separated, is not an 18th- century European invention. It is abundantly present in the Indian tradition. It is implied in a doctrine and an institution which no-one dares to mention without putting on a grimace of horror and uttering shrieks of indignation : Chaturvarnya, usually mistranslated as *the caste system*.

I may briefly repeat that there is a radical distinction between the division of Hindu society (as of some disappearing tribal societies) in endogamous groups (castes or jatis), and the idealized division into four *colours* (varnas), which historically has come to be superimposed upon the actual division in castes. Within the varna ideology one should make the distinction between its historically acquired hereditary dimension¹³⁷ and its fundamental categorization of the social function into four groups, each with its own duties.

So, when I mention varna, please don't start fuming about *Brahmin tyranny* and the "*wretched condition of the downtrodden*". What I mean is the distinction between four functions in society : Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra, quite apart from the way in which the personnel for these functions gets selected or the way they treat each other.

It is a fact of life that "*the apple does not fall far from the tree*", that children have a statistical tendency to resemble their parents, not only in appearance but also in aptitudes. This trend is strengthened by the traditional social setting, in which children would automatically receive training in their parents' professional skills, in the family business. Nevertheless, the relation between parents' and children's aptitudes is only statistical : there are plenty of cases where young people have a genuine desire for a different kind of profession. Therefore, the Bhagavad Gita says (apparently against a swelling trend to fix profession on birth) that not birth, but aptitude or quality (*guna*) determines one's varna. The Buddha too said that moral conduct and mental disposition, not birth, determined who is a Brahmin.¹³⁸ So, the division of human society in four varnas is distinct from its fixation into a hereditary caste system.

Another important component of the varna ideology, is the strict separation between the activities of the varnas. In the discussion of indigenous Hindu secularism, we should draw attention to the separation between the two authority-wielding varnas, the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. In the Varna ideology, the Brahmin is the man of knowledge, whose authority is intellectual and universal : truth does not change with crossing borders. The Kshatriya is the man of action, whose authority is political and subject to limitation in time and space: his authority lasts a legislature and is limited to a state.

The idea of separation between these two varnas can ideally be understood as a separation between the *secular* domain of action and politics, and the *non- secular* domain of knowledge and spirituality. Like the separation between the three powers in the modern democracy (legislative, executive and judicial), this separation between the domain of power and the domain of the Word must be welcomed as the best way of letting the two domains flourish optimally.¹³⁹ The separation between the

domain of government and the sphere of thought is not a matter of universal consensus : its antithesis is Plato's notion of the "*philosopher-king*". This notion is contradictory as well as utopian (which is why the thoroughly realistic social philosophy of Hinduism rejects it), and the philosopher Karl Popper correctly saw it as the ideological core of totalitarianism and as an "*enemy of free society*".

Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo have sometimes described social and political developments in varna terms. Thus, feudalism was Kshatriya Raj, capitalism Vaishya Raj, and communism Shudra Raj.^{[140](#)} Even in all those countries where no jati system exists, varna categories can be meaningfully applied. For example, modern problems can be described as a mixing-up of caste activities or attitudes. Commercial gurus like Rajneesh are a mix of Brahmin and Vaishya (the profit-oriented varna), corrupt politicians are a mix of Kshatriya and Vaishya.

For a poisonous mix of Kshatriya and Brahmin, a classic example is Jawaharlal Nehru. He acted as a Brahmin where he should have been a Kshatriya, and he wanted to use Kshatriya political power to push an ideology and destroy other ideologies, something he should have left to people in Brahmin functions.^{[141](#)}

When the Chinese invaded Tibet, action was called for, a Kshatriya approach.^{[142](#)} Instead, Nehru philosophized that the Chinese felt strategically insecure, and that therefore their annexation of Tibet was understandable.^{[143](#)} But understanding is a Brahmin's business, not the duty of a Kshatriya at the helm of a state.

In his dealings with Pakistan too, he tried to "*see their viewpoint also*", and consequently made concessions of which millions of Hindus have suffered the consequences (handing over pieces of territory, stopping the reconquest of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir when it was succeeding, refraining from efforts to enforce the Pakistani part of the Nehru-Liaquat pact). The duty of a ruler is not to see the other party's viewpoint (in the political arena all parties are well capable of looking after their own interests), but to take care of his own people's interests.

The 1962 Chinese invasion was the final demonstration that Nehru was singularly unfit to rule the country : instead of keeping an eye on strategic realities, he was indulging in his ideological trip of socialism and non-aligned "*peaceful co-existence*". This incurable sleepwalker could have made a fine editor of a secularist paper, or some such lower-end Brahmin job, but in Kshatriya functions like ruling a country besieged by enemies, his qualities were quite misplaced.

So, the Brahmin and Kshatriya functions have to be kept separate. Rulers should not wage ideological campaigns, they should govern the country taking ideology-based realities as they are. On the other hand, in a modern state, the ruler is constrained by a philosophy embodied in the Constitution. And his decision are influenced by a general framework of values and ideas. So there is also an intimate connection between ideology and polity, between Brahmin and Kshatriya. More precisely : there is a subordination of polity to ideology, though only to the extent that the exigencies of the political reality leave room for ideological choices.

In a sense, that is the application of the hierarchical principle inherent in the varna doctrine : while there is equality in the sense that the actual groupings in society, the jatis, should have a maximum of internal autonomy (their own mores, their own judiciary), and that all people have different duties according to their varna, and need not be concerned with other people's duty, there is a hierarchy in the functions of the varnas. The Shudra (the worker who serves an employer, the artist who please an audience) is subordinate in the sense that he is employed by the other varnas. The Vaishya citizenry is subordinate to the public order enforced by the Kshatriya. And the Kshatriya rulers are, in framing their policies, subordinate to the Brahmin realm of literate culture and ideology. A policy necessarily stems from a social philosophy, which in turn is integrated in a larger world-view. it is in this functional co-operation that the different social functions (varnas) of thought and government, are co-ordinated into a larger social order.

10.6. Sarva Dharma Samabhava

The slogan "*Sarva dharma samabhava*", or "*equal respect for all religions*" is not a part of Hindu tradition, it is a recent creation of Mahatma Gandhi. One may of course argue that it is in the spirit of Hindu tradition. But that is precisely the question : does "*equal respect for all religions*" really sum up traditional Hindu secularism?

We need not go into the exact meaning of the word *dharma* here. The Mahatma wrote and thought largely in English, and the original phrase is the English one, so *dharma* merely figures as a translation of *religion*. What he meant, was in effect: equal respect for Christianity Islam and Hinduism.

Now, some people take this to mean that all religions are equally true. It seems the Mahatma himself has on several occasions put it like that. Latter-day cults like the Baha'i and the Ramakrishna Mission in its new non-Hindu colours, declare that all Prophets, as well as their messages and Scriptures, are "*equally true*". Of course, this is rank nonsense.

The utterances of *prophets* are just as much statements on which logical operations are possible, as anyone else's statements. Of course, where they use metaphors and other figures of speech, that special type of language has to be taken into account, just as when non- prophets use such language. but effectively, even prophets' statements can be true and untrue, and if that is too hard to swallow, let us at least agree that two prophetic statements can be in conflict, or logically irreconcilable.

When Krishna says that it is always He who is the object of devotion, no matter what the form of the mental and physical focus of worship may be (such as gods and idols), he is in logical conflict with Mohammed who declares that Allah does not tolerate other gods beside Himself and wants idols to be destroyed. These two cannot be true at the same time. Either these many forms are fit for worship, or they are not.

Now, one might try to be clever and say that at some higher logical level, a synthesis of two opposites is possible. Alright : God's unity and God's multiplicity through many forms are indeed compatible, are two ways of looking at the same thing. But the point in exclusivist doctrines is precisely that this synthesis is rejected. Only one viewpoint takes you to heaven, all

the others, and especially syncretistic attempts to associate idolatrous viewpoints with the strict monotheist viewpoint, lead straight to hell.

When two *prophets* give an opposite opinion on the same question, one can still say that both were not really talking about the same thing, because the cultural circumstances were different. Thus, some founders taught non-violence and non-killing, including strict vegetarianism, while others exhorted their followers to kill and gave the example themselves, and sanctioned animal sacrifices. But then, what is *prophethood* if it is so determined by cultural circumstances ? If the one and eternal God had one plan for humanity and wanted to teach it his one religion, why is He sending a Mahavira teaching absolute non-violence to one place and a Mohammed teaching war to another place ? It seems there is something wrong with the notion of *prophet* as an agent sent by the one God.

One may distort history and say that the Indians to whom Mahavira preached were less warlike than the Arabs to whom Mohammed preached. This does injustice to both peoples, but mostly to the Pagan Arabs, who were far more humane in their warfare than the Prophet ; but let us now suppose it is true. Then what was the point of God sending prophets, if He just gave the different peoples what they already had ? He sent the Prophets precisely to change things. So, if He could, through Mohammed, make the Arabs give up idolatry, totally alter the position of women, and other such drastic changes, why didn't He also order them to become vegetarians as He had done to the Indians long before via Mahavira ?

The answer is that Mahavira wasn't God's spokesman. His insight was human, and he never pretended more than that.¹⁴⁴ Anyone can see for himself that getting killed is an occasion of suffering, so it is something one should not inflict on other sentient beings : that is how non-violence can be thought up without needing God's intervention. And the state of Liberation or Enlightenment which Upanishadic teachers taught, was always presented as a state which everyone can achieve, not as something which God has exclusively given to this or that chosen prophet.

The truth is universal, and to the extent that religions hold up this universal truth, they can be said to be *true*. But what constitutes the difference between religions, is mostly the way and degree of putting other

things than the universal truth in the centre. Some religions take the natural aspiration for truth in their followers, and then channel it towards peculiar and exclusivistic doctrines that have little in common with the universal truth.

Let us drop this pipe-dream that all religions are equally true. We may say that the spiritual aspirations in human beings, regardless of the culture they happen to be born into, are equally true. But the belief systems that feed on this basic human urge for universal truth, often by mis-educating and misdirecting man towards non- universalist beliefs, cannot at all be said to be equally true.

It should be clear that "*Sarva dharma samabhava*", if interpreted as "*equal truth of all religions*" oversteps the limits of secularism as a doctrine of the state, unconcerned with the internal affairs of religion : it is a far-reaching statement about the nature of religion itself. It is moreover an untenable statement. It is, on top of that, at least in most of its formulations, far from religiously neutral : it rejects the Hindu humanist conception of religious teachings (as being products of the universal human consciousness), and espouses the Islamic prophetic conception of religious teachings (as being God-given messages). Finally, it discourages critical thought about religion, and is thus opposed to the scientific temper. So, this doctrine of the "*equal truth of all religions*" is not really helping anyone. We better discard it.

Both the line taken by the Communists, that all religions are equally untrue and deserve equal disrespect, and the line taken by the sentimentalists, that all religions are equally worthy of respect because equally true, do injustice to the fundamentally human character of religious culture. The human intention behind a given religious practice is worthy of respect. But the belief systems and concomitant moral codes are open to criticism, like any human construction, and some of them may be discarded, even while others may stand the test of experience and remain sanatana, forever. So, there is no apriori equality between religions. It is a different matter that people believing in superstitious doctrines still deserve equal respect with the people whose insight is more advanced. In that sense there should of course be "*equal respect for all religions*".

To conclude this reflection on the "*equality of all religions*", let us mention the view that secularism is really a synthesis of all religions. Secularist Mahesh Jethmalani agrees with the BJP view that a common civil code for members of all religious communities in India is a legitimate demand of *secularism*, but he agrees on the basis of an unusual interpretation of the term: "*The [uniform civil code] is in keeping with the needs of a modern Republic. It is devoid of Hindu ritualism and is rational in the extreme. It is religiously neutral, in that it calls upon the Hindu as much as the Muslim to eschew traditional ways of life in the interests of a new 'national religion' which synthesizes the best from all the religions in the land.*"^{[145](#)}

It goes without saying that our secularist's bias is showing. On top of his explicit exclusives against *Hindu ritualism*, there is his stress on *synthesis*, which very word is enough to enchant a Hindu, but incapable of arousing a Muslim's interest.^{[146](#)} This synthesis of the best of all religions is a make-believe, which is held up to fool Hindus, but which the members of a number of religions will scornfully reject, because it would go against the exclusive claims which constitute the basic identity of their religions.

Moreover, our secularist's utter superficiality and non-comprehension of religion is showing. As Mahatma Gandhi understood well enough, in spite of his prayer-sessions with readings from different Scriptures, one religion (in his case Hinduism) is quite sufficient to guide an individual all through life. A "*combination of religions*" is as nonsensical as two suns shining in the sky. What is possible is one broad-minded religion which can assimilate new forms : one Sanatana Dharma which is intrinsically pluralist, and can appreciate new accents (as on *brotherhood* and social service^{[147](#)}) proposed by other religions. But a *synthesis* of the doctrines that everyone makes his own Liberation through yoga,, that Jesus has brought Salvation once and for all, and that you get a ticket to Heaven by affirming that Mohammed is the final Prophet, is simply nonsense.

Synthesis implies the rejection of the rejection of synthesis. So it means the rejection of the exclusivist claims of Islam and Christianity. I agree with our secularist that *synthesis* and a "*new national religion*" are the solution. That "*national religion*" is age-old, it is Sanatana Dharma. But this Dharma

is sanat kumar, eternally young, so it is indeed *new*, especially to those who are under the spell of secularism and have blacked out from their consciousness this age-old heritage.

The most surprising thing about Mahesh Jethmalani's secularism, is that it is quite the opposite of a separation of state and religion : it has the ambition of creating and promoting a religion through state arrangements like the common civil code. In my secularist homeland, we have a uniform civil code, but no one there is fantastic enough to see it as a stratagem in a larger project of floating a new religion. In fact, we think it is none of the state's business to create, destroy, promote, discourage, or indeed to synthesize a religion. We think it is none of the state's business to "*call upon [members of the different religions] to eschew traditional ways of life*": those ways that are in conflict with the law, are simply forbidden, and all others, traditional or not, are simply left to the people's own choice. The secular state is not making any *call* to *eschew* any ways of life whatsoever.

A truly secular state is by definition not a despotic state. It does not choose or devise or *synthesize* a religion for you. It is a self-restrained state. That is why the Nehruvian socialist doctrine of a hungry state, with state initiative and state guidance, has naturally combined with a perverted and despotic kind of secularism.

10.7. Dharma

The official Hindi term for *secularism* is dharmanirpekshata, i.e. *dharma-neutrality*. Critics of Nehruvian secularism say the correct translation would be panthanirpekshata or sampradayanirpekshata, i.e. *sect- neutrality*.

Of course, sect-neutrality is an indispensable component of secularism. Perhaps the secularist translators wanted to add another component by preferring the term dharma- neutrality.

The word *religion*, in most European languages, can be both an uncountable and a countable substantive.¹⁴⁸ As an uncountable, it means "*the religious dimension*", and leaves any sect-wise or belief-wise contents

to that religious dimension unspecified. As a countable, it means "*a religion*", "*a set of religious doctrines and practices*", "*a sect united around common doctrines and practices*".

As a translation of both these uses of the term *religion*, westernized Indians have employed the word *dharma*. As an example of the countable use, the well-known Gandhian slogan *sarva-dharma-samabhava* means "*equal respect for all religions*". "*A dharma*" here means "*a religion*". By contrast, the expression *Dharma Rajya* uses *dharma* as an uncountable. It is, however, not normally rendered as "*rule of religion*" but as "*rule of righteousness*". And that opens the discussion of the exact meaning of the term *dharma*.

Dharma means : that which sustains.

Every singular or composite entity has its own *dharma*, its *swadharma*. All the composite classes to which an entity belongs, have again their own *dharma*. Thus, an individual has his *dharma*, which is partly specific to himself, partly in common with the family he belongs to : *kula-dharma*. This in turn is partly in common with the *jati* to which the family belongs : the *jati-dharma*. In the *varna*-ideology, every *jati* is categorized under one of the four *varnas*, so the *jati-dharma* will partly be differentiating from the other classes within the *varna*, and partly be the common *dharma* of the entire *varna*. Further, all *varnas*, and all classifications of any kind, ultimately share in a universal human *dharma*, *manava-dharma*. And this in turn is part of the over-all cosmic *dharma* (the cosmic ordered pattern, for which the specific Vedic term is *Rta*).

Let us give another example that has nothing to do with traditional Hindu society. Every individual cow has her own *dharma*. While partly individual, it is largely a common *dharma* of the cow species : the biological characteristics and functions that define the cow's role in the larger ecosystem. The cow *dharma* is partly specific, partly in common with the mammal *dharma* (skipping several intermediate classifications), which is again partly mammal-specific, partly in common with the all-vertebrates *dharma*. The vertebrate *dharma* is partly the all-animal *dharma*, which is partly specific and differentiating from the plant *dharma*, and partly the common *dharma* of all living beings. Thus, self-regulation and procreation

are the dharma of all living beings, but the animal dharma involves breathing oxygen while the plant dharma involves breathing carbondioxide.

Materially, one's dharma is the actualization of an inner programming (primarily, but not exhaustively, the genetic programming). Formally, it is the playing of a role within the larger ecosystem, in interaction with all the other entities with their own allotted dharmas.

This inner programming which determines one's dharma, is called guna, quality, characteristics, or more uniquely swabhava, own nature. In lower species, this programming is exclusively biological, i.e. mostly genetical and partly environmental. In man, one section of the environmental factors, called learning or education, gains immensely in importance. So, an individual's guna is partly uniquely individual, partly in common with his family, tribe, etc. through genetics as well as through a common environment (common experiences), and it is partly a matter of learning (a directed programme of experiences), and to that extent it is in common with those who go through the same learning.

The integration into the larger system is an automatical affair in the lower species. In man, it is in large measure a matter of conscious assent to what is consciously perceived as one's role in the larger whole. In lower life forms, as in machine, dharma is the actual functioning of a norm, the fact that processes do not take place at random, but conform to and preserve a given order, e.g. the thermoregulation processes which preserve a constant body temperature in mammals, or the maintenance of the optimum population level of a given species within a given ecosystem. In human society, it is partly that, because man participates in the general biological laws ; but partly, the human dharma is a conscious participation in the actualization and the upholding of a system of norms. To that extent, the manava-dharma is not merely the actual functioning of an in-built norm, but the conscious acceptance and fulfilling of one's duty.

So, for the individual human being, dharma primarily means duty. Dharma means the acceptance and fulfillment of one's duty, i.e. the behaviour and occupation corresponding to one's place within the system. For society as a whole, it means the integrative system comprising all

individual and group duties. it is the social order which is upheld by the conscious participation of all members.

Now what does this have to do with religion ? Hindu social philosophy recognizes four goals (purusharthas) in human life: Kama (pleasure), Artha (gain), Dharma (duty) and Moksha (liberation). It is clear that religion in its strictest and highest sense, as the individual's spiritual life, belongs to the fourth aim, liberation. The inner spiritual process, the freeing oneself of bondage through purification of the mind, is directed towards moksha. Then where did dharma get to be associated with religion ?

The dharma is the norm system which ideally regulates all human activity. Man's life is ordered by the social as well as by the larger cosmic order. Now, there is a specific category of activities, which have no other use or function, except to explicitate man's integration in a social or cosmic order. For instance, one ordering of human society is the division in age groups. Every *primitive* society has rituals explicating this ordering dimension : the rites of passage from one age group to the next. For another instance, one dimension of the cosmic order, is the division of the year cycle in seasons. The starting-points of the seasons may be defined astronomically (solstice, equinox, full or empty moon), or through atmospherical or terrestrial events (end of the harvest, first rain), but at any rate, they divide the year into different stages, each with its own characteristics and concomitant human activities (its own dharma), which altogether form a cycle or recurring totality. The celebrations at each of these fixed points of the year cycle, have no other function but to explicitate this aspect (of unity through a differentiation into different phases each with its own dharma) of the cosmic order.

Celebrations and rituals are an essential aspect of dharma. One can be born, become a man, start living with a woman, exchange this life for the next, all without any pomp or ritual. It can be done : animals do it. but it is not done. Precisely because man is a conscious being, he wants to give conscious expression to the different phases that make up a cycle, and to the different functions that make up a society. That is one of the reasons why people wear job-specific uniforms. That is the reason why children are baptized, why diplomas are handed out in a big ceremony, why couples are

wedded in great gathering of friends and relatives, with a specific ritual, why another ritual is gone through to say farewell to someone who has died, etc.

So, in that sense, rituals and celebrations are the most human component of our participation in the social and cosmic order, of our dharma. Take for instance, the Holi festival. Holi is first of all a spring celebration. The exuberant ritual of throwing paint at each other and not sparing each other at all, is a variety of the standard elements of spring rituals the world over. In some places in Europe, on the first real spring day, i.e. when the sun is out and it unmistakably feels like spring, youngsters from upper-storey windows pour buckets of water on unsuspecting passers-by. The logic is that on the first day of spring, people need to wake up from their winter slumber. So, spring rituals like Holi are shocking and disrespectful.

On top of that, it seems that Holi also has a varna connotation : it is the day of the Shudra varna, when the class of people who habitually get their hands dirty, are free to draw the other varnas into a celebration of their own part in society. Similarly, Raksha Bandhan ("*bond of protection*", the day of the thread) is the celebration of the Brahmin varna, Vijayadashami (victory day) of the Kshatriya varna, and Deepawali (apart from being a typical autumn festival, with candles to get through the dark months) celebrates the Vaishya varna. So, every function in society gets explicit expression on a specially reserved day. This is how dharma, the system of duties, gives rise to rituals and celebrations, the things that we often categorize under the heading *religion*.

So, dharma, or duty, in its broader sense implies also the activities that explicitate the world order, the *useless* rituals and celebrations, which form the outer or public part of religion.

Modernist bores, of course, are against all this *waste* of money and especially of time. Under their pressure, some religious people have tried to de-emphasize the role of rituals and celebrations, and stressed the religious dimension of useful work: "*Work is worship*". But the modernists can't be appeased with this defensive excuse, so in a recent seminar in Delhi, they countered it with an extended slogan : "*Work is worship, but worship is not work*". So, it is time to explain to these people that the value of these rituals

and celebrations resides in the very fact that they are not *work*, that they are meant not to be *useful*. They are a popular way of directly tuning in to the larger order, of explicating the order of which our activities are implicitly a part, of strengthening the awareness that makes the daily treadmill of *useful work* meaningful. This expression of awareness of the world order constitutes the difference between animals, who simply obey and fulfill this order, and human being, who consciously participate in it.

Anyway, we have established that dharma basically means *duty* and "*participation in the social order*". In the broader sense, it means all the customs and rituals that give expression to this social order, to its values and norms. In a broad sense, we could call this *culture*. The purely non-functional, expressive and ritual part of it, can be called *religion*, as long as we don't forget that there is a deeper, inner dimension to religion which is not concerned with the world order, but on the contrary with moksha (i.e. unconcern with the world).

From the basic meaning, we may derive the meaning : the virtue of being conscious of and faithful to one's duty. And since duty is defined relative to the world order, this can be re-worded as : the virtue of respecting and upholding the world order. The common translation of this derived meaning is righteousness. Thus, Dharma Rajya is "*rule of righteousness*". That is what Ram Rajya, Ram's rule, is supposed to epitomize and symbolize.

The same meaning, we find in Dharma Yuddha, the "*war of righteousness*". Some people, very ignorant or inspired by anti-Hindu motives, translate this as *religious war*. And then they conclude : see, you Hindus, you also have this concept of crusade or jihad. In reality, the "*war of righteousness*" is not a jihad at all. Dharma Yuddha means firstly a chivalrous war, a war in which a number of rules are observed, a war in which the world order is respected, as opposed to the all-out war in which anything goes as long as it results in victory. Secondly, it can be stretched to mean (but this is non- classical) a war in defense of the world order, against those violate and threaten this order. Dharma is concerned with people's conduct (achaar), not with their belief or opinion (vichaar). Therefore, a Dharma Yuddha is by definition never directed against *unbelievers* or

"*heterodox believers*", but exclusively against people who through their actions break the rules and arrangements that constitute the world order.

In this connection, the Mahabharata, and especially its episode known as the Bhagavad Gita, is sometimes mentioned as containing the Hindu doctrine of "*Religious War*". In reality, the Gita is explicitly not about a war between Believers and Unbelievers, between Chosen ones and Doomed ones. For instance, Dronacharya is equally attached to the Pandavas as to the kauravas, both have been his pupils, but because of his specific secular status, he is duty-bound to fight on the Kaurava side.

It is purely worldly events that had pitted the two camps against each other, not a theology. The Kauravas had violated the order by breaking an agreement with the Pandavas and remaining irreconcilable in their unrighteous position. They had not refused to accept some belief system, they had merely violated a secular agreement. After that, honour and the secular interest of their family force the Pandavas to take up arms. This is now their duty, as Krishna reminds the wavering Arjuna. The *religious* element in the Gita pre-battle discussion is, that the capacity for doing one's secular duty is grounded in an insight into the true nature of the Self, who is a foreigner incarnated in this world, and not affected by the worldly situations in which he finds it his duty to operate.

So, the concepts of "*dharma*" and "*religion*" overlap only partly. The term dharmanirpekshata becomes a bit absurd or even sinister when it turns out to say "*duty- neutrality*" or "*righteousness-neutrality*" (though it applies accurately to the utter corruption in which Nehru's secular socialism has plunged the Indian state). The absurdity really comes out when we translate it as "*value-system-neutrality*". You just cannot have a polity without a value-system that sustains the unity and integrity of the whole. Even secularism implies something of a value-system.

So, if we start from the uncountable use of the word dharma (righteousness etc.), we have to reject dharmanirpekshata as the translation for the Western concept of "*secularism*".

Let us consider the countable use : one dharma, two dharmas, etc. As we have seen, this use of the word exists. There is the soldier's dharma, the

sweeper's dharma, the schoolboy's dharma, etc. There is the individual dharma, the occupational dharma, the family dharma, the tribal dharma, and of course the state dharma. So there are indeed many dharmas. Every entity has its own duty or value system, based on its definition, its characteristics, its place in the larger whole. The state too has its own dharma. The state's dharma is not at all neutral, it is very specific. It is different from the school dharma, from the prison dharma, from the village dharma. To illustrate its distinct dharma, the state, like every entity, has its own dharma-typical celebrations. In a Saint Thomas school, they celebrate Saint Thomas feast. In a family (at least in the West), they celebrate every member's birthday. In a village, they have a celebration upon completion of the harvest. And the Indian Republic celebrates Independence Day and Republic Day.

So, in a world of many dharmas, the secular state too has its own dharma. There is no room for any *dharma-neutrality*. Let us use the words in their proper meaning. Secularism is *sect-neutrality*, sampradayanirpekshata. This term at once expresses the opposition to sampradayikta, *sectarianism* (or *communalism*).

This precise and unambiguous translation also clinches the issue regarding yet another term proposed as the equivalent of *secularism* : Lokayat. This term means *worldliness*. It was the name of an ancient school of thought, mostly known as the *materialists*. One could say they were atheist and even anti-religious (the two are not synonymous, cfr. Buddha's atheist religion), but they were just as much a sampradaya, a *sect*. And materialism and atheism are just as much *belief systems* as theism, monotheism, pantheism and the rest. By contrast, secularism is not a belief system. It is merely a political arrangement that separates the state from sects and belief systems. So, regarding the Lokayat-sect, both ancient and modern (the Leftist sampradaya), and regarding the atheist belief system, the secular state has to keep strict non-commitment and neutrality.

Chapter 11. The Riots

11.1 Reporting Vs. Comment

"The 'progressive' people in this country show a remarkable eagerness to see communalism even in the most harmless observations of [Hindu] religious leaders, while overlooking such outrageously communal and provocative statements as the one made by the former government official Syed Shahabuddin, that contact with the Hindus debased the Muslim, or the one by Syed Abdullah Bukhari, the Imam of the Jama Masjid in Delhi, that the Muslims would resort to a civil war." This observation by Subhash Chandra Sarkar¹⁴⁹ is quite correct, and it explains the peculiar features of press reporting on communal riots. The progressive pressmen attribute every riot to *"Hindu communalism raising its ugly head"*, while justifying or explaining away the undeniable cases of Muslim communalist violence.

When reading the press reports about communal riots, one should make a distinction between two stages of riot reporting. The day after a riot breaks out, the press will just write what happened, in some detail. The report will be a little bit blurred by the obligatory usage of non-definite terms for the communities involved : *"As members of one community passed through an area dominated by another community, stones were thrown at them"*, etc. But the experienced reader can mostly understand who is who.

However, the editorials devoted to these instances of *communal carnage* are not interested in the details of the matter, and in their effort to allot guilt and suggest remedies, they often implicitly start from a riot scenario which is totally unsupported by the factual details that appeared in the first report. The autumn of 1990 has offered some striking examples of this recurring press phenomenon.

For instance, about the Hyderabad violence of December 1990 there could be no doubt whatsoever about who was the aggressor and who the victim. The violence was, according to press reports, started by revenge

action of Muslims against the police, for killing an influential Muslim goonda, Mohammed Sardar. This man was a convicted murderer, and while free on parole, he had killed a policeman, and gone underground. When the police caught up with him, he was killed in an exchange of firing.¹⁵⁰ This encounter *triggered* a wave of stabbing by people belonging to the same community as this Mohammed. Not only in Hindu-Muslim terms it is very clear who started, but also in miscreant-police terms: the first victim was not the Muslim goonda, but a policeman. it is not the *partisan anti-Hindu* police who killed the victims for whose murder Mohammed Sardar was convicted, it was not they who killed the policeman that was killed by him, and it was not they who started the stabbing.

Moreover, while in many riots Muslims take the initiative but then lose it to the more numerous Hindus, here it was the Muslims who were on the attack all through the weeks of violence.¹⁵¹ The Statesman reported : "*An unusual feature of the current clashes was the heavy toll inflicted on the majority community, forcing many of them to flee their hearth and homes south of the Musi, which were immediately occupied by members of the minority community.*" The inserted comment that heavy suffering on the part of the Hindus is *unusual*, is of course based on secularist estimates. The report continues: "*House-to-house searches in the [predominantly Muslim] old city yielded a rich haul of weapons, imported from the north.*"

But in the same issue, the editorial has heard nothing of Muslim attacks, Muslim goondas, Muslim arms caches. Under the caption Spark from Ayodhya, it writes : "*If the trouble in Aligarh followed the stabbing of a policeman [by a member of an unnamed you-know-which community], it is not yet clear what caused the eruption in Hyderabad. Nor is it worthwhile any longer to look for specific reasons since a focal point already exists.*"¹⁵² The focal point is (guess once) the BJP/VHP's "*cynical, vote- catching policies relating to the disputed shrines in Ayodhya*".

If one would believe the columns in the national English- language press, Mr. Advani's Rathayatra has left a trail of bloodshed. But when one turns to the actual reports of the riots, this very serious allegation turns out to be totally contradicted by the facts.

During the Rathyatra, which was underway for about a month until it was stopped on October 22, there were some riots in Karnataka, and many very serious riots in Uttar Pradesh in the first state, Advani had only tipped the North-East corner on his way from Maharashtra to Andhra Pradesh, in the second he had not set foot at all. Now, those who are biased and perforce need to blame Advani, can say that at least he *created the atmosphere* that led to the riots. But then they should explain how he managed to cause riots five hundred miles distant from his Rathyatra, and none in its vicinity. Where he could personally impress his *atmosphere* on audiences, there was no violence, but where it was only a distant echo, it would have moved people to utter barbarities like those that took place in Gonda, U.P.: a strange explanation. To my mind, it would seem that such an explanation does not spring from the *scientific temper* which secularism seeks to inculcate, but rather from a political compulsion to blame the Hindu campaign at any cost and/or to shield the real culprit.

11.2 Inspiring and starting riots

A far more logical explanation for the non-occurrence of riots in or near the Rathyatra, and the large-scale occurrence of serious riots in Uttar Pradesh, is this. For the common Hindu, the passing of the Ram Rath was a joyous religious event, perhaps compounded by a sense of relief or even victory because it announced the symbolical righting of the centuries of persecution inflicted by Muslim rulers upon the Hindus. At any rate, it was a happy affair that sweetened the atmosphere rather than create bitterness and violence. Moreover, Mr. Advani in his speeches called on all Indians to celebrate and to cultivate harmony. That his speeches were not inflammatory, I know for certain even though I heard not one of them : Mr. Advani has many enemies who watch him for discrediting mistakes, and if he had made any objectionable statement, it would have been splashed across the front pages. It may be true, as some papers have written, that some local BJP leaders did make inflammatory speeches. But at least the starring speaker called for peace and harmony, and the very invoking of Ram created a positive atmosphere good enough to yield the actual result that no riots place.

By contrast, in Uttar Pradesh the ubiquitous public speaker was chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, a man with an impressive crime record (highlighted in Illustrated Weekly after the 1989 elections, but now forgotten thanks to his uncompromising *secularism*), who gave very inflammatory and confrontationist speeches : "*Not even a bird shall be able to enter Ayodhya*", for "*We will crush them*". The power of the word was demonstrated once more : while the man who called for self-restraint and harmony had a peaceful Rathayatra, the man who called for confrontation, got confrontation.¹⁵³ In spite of unprecedented police deployment and curfews in many towns, riots broke out.

A recurring scenario, in conformity with the general pattern of Hindu-Muslim riots in the twentieth century, was that Hindu processions, especially the Ram Jyoti processions, were attacked when passing through Muslim- dominated areas. These attacks were largely a materialization of all the fiery curses that Mulayam in his mass rallies had cast upon the Ram processions. In many cases, the Hindus retaliated by attacking any Muslims they could find, which unfortunately were mostly innocent bystanders. Or villagers who got involved in a riot in town went back to their village and attacked the Muslims they could find there (that was the scenario of the huge Bhagalpur carnage of 1989, this repeated on a smaller scale in Gonda).

However, it seems it was not only by the power of the word that those riots got going. The Gonda riot started when actual bombs were thrown at a Hindu procession. According to press reports as well as the report by a BJP fact-finding team, at least one of them had been thrown from the local Janata Dal office by people working for Munnar Khan, the local MLA. This man is a friend of the chief minister : with the latter's support, he was elected in 1989 as an independent candidate (though a JD member) against the official candidate of the anti- Congress combine (a BJP man). After people had been killed in this unilateral attack on the procession (officially six ; according to Congress MP Anand Singh, one hundred), mutual fighting broke out. And still later, some Hindu hotheads took out revenge parties to Muslim quarters outside the city.

Many papers have, in their final overview of the riot, consciously blurred the first stage of the Gonda riot, and highlighted the last stage in order to absolve the Muslims and put the blame on the Hindus, i.e. on the Janmabhoomi movement, i.e. on L.K. Advani who was far away.

Consider this report in the Times of India : "The procession numbering about 5000 people was wending its way through the narrow streets of Colonelganj shouting some slogans which could be deemed provocative in an atmosphere of tension, when it was attacked with stones, bombs and other missiles. The attack allegedly began from the roof of the Janata Dal office, according to some shopkeepers whose shops were gutted."¹⁵⁴ This suggests that slogan-shouting on the part of the processionists has *caused* the violence. But of course, bombs are not picked up and thrown in an emotional reaction to inflammatory slogans, as too many journalists would like us to believe. Bombs are quite certainly purchased or made beforehand, and a bomb-attack is definitely premeditated. In fact, on rooftops not even loose-lying stones are that readily available for impulsive acts of stone-throwing.

It is very clear to an unbiased reader that the Gonda carnage has started with a pre-meditated attack on the procession. Going by the original newspaper reports, some Janata Dal *miscreants* affiliated with Muslim party leaders were the aggressors, and the processionists were the victims. However, it is in the nature of aggression that the victims get the blame. Thus, a rapist will usually say that the girl had asked for it, that she had *provoked* him. Here too, it is not stated simply that the processionists *were attacked*. Rather, it is said in goonda-speak, approvingly broadcast by the secularist press, that the procession has *provoked violence* and *caused riots*.

In the same newspaper report, mention is made of an earlier incident: "*It all began with a girl being teased by anti-social elements owing allegiance to one Talukdar Khan.*" Even for this earlier stage of the communal conflict, the paper does not hide what side started. And then it goes on to say that "*the other side was provoked and mobbed his house*", without specifying how exactly they were "provoked" by the Muslims, upon which "*he drew up plans with his supporters to attack the procession on September 30*".¹⁵⁵

So, at every stage of the escalation, you see Muslims starting, Hindus merely reacting, and Muslims pre- planning large-scale violence. And it is not me who says so, I read this in the reporting of secularist newspapers (though not on their Opinion page). These are indications from unsuspected sources that members of the Muslim community take a disproportionately large part in starting communal violence.

11.3. Received wisdom on riots

As a foreigner, I have no access to certain archives, much less to police records. But going by the riot information generally available, I do find that there is truth in the received wisdom that

1. a clear majority of the riots are started by Muslims,
2. a clear majority of the victims are Muslims, at least in the final count
3. a clear majority of the victims shot by the police (not including the Kar Sevaks) are Muslims; the police in most of these case claims self-defense against attacks by mobs or snipers.

To start with an unsuspected source, Mufti Mohammed Saiyid, Home minister, made a statement on communal riots between January and April 1990. It lists nine riots, with their causes. The monthly Muslim India reproduces the list¹⁵⁶, but omits parts of the stated causes of five of the riots, e.g.: "*Clash between anti-social elements...on black marketing of cinema tickets*". This leaves the reader guessing what was omitted. The causes of two other riots are stated in the well-known indeterminate terminology: "*Alleged misbehavior with a girl of the other community*". but the two remaining riot causes, the only ones clearly saying which community was attacked (and leaving little doubt as to which community attacked), are these : "*Stoning of Holi procession passing a place of worship*", and "*Alleged murder of the president of VHP, Kheda District, by persons belonging to other community*".

One might of course start blaming any possible (I hasten to prefix *alleged*) *provocative slogans* uttered by the processionists and by that local VHP leader; but normally, people who start the violence, like throwing

stones or committing murder, are held responsible for these acts, and at least partly responsible for the reactive violence which they may trigger. It is humanly quite feasible to listen to objectionable and insulting slogans without having a knee-jerk reaction of throwing bombs. It is a free human decision to react with violence. At worst, slogans can be a reason for violence ; given human freedom, they can never be the cause.

This take excuse of the provocative slogans leading mechanically to stone-throwing and worse, is used routinely by biased reporters. For another example, on October 30 there was a riot in Bijnor, with officially 14 people killed, others say 55. A procession with about 100 women members of Durga Vahini had gone out to the Ghanta Ghar area. *"There they raised communal slogans, resulting in stone-pelting and bomb-throwing."*¹⁵⁷ This cheap excuse for a pre-planned bomb attack is even contradicted by other information in the same article. Superintendent of Police Praveen Singh arrested Municipal Chairman Javed Aftab Siddiqui, alleged to have masterminded the riot. District Magistrate Ramesh Yadav confirmed that the violence was instigated by J.A. Siddiqui. This case proves that newspapers keep on blaming the slogan-shouters even when it is crystal-clear from their own information that the violence was premeditated and engineered by the other side.

Let's hear some examples of newspapers inadvertently reporting that Muslims have started riots, in late 1990. On October 29, *"members of two communities indulged in heavy brickbattling, stabbing and exchange of fire. The whole trouble started when Kar Sevaks shouting anti- government slogans burnt the effigy of the chief minister, mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav [so far, no-one hurt], and members of the other community objected to this."*¹⁵⁸

In Lucknow, BJP people *"marched towards Moulviganj shouting slogans. Seeing the frenzied mob advancing towards them the members of the other community took up positions and pelted stones and missiles, resulting in a violent clash."*¹⁵⁹

In Bulandshahr, near Aligarh, a bomb factory was *discovered* when it exploded, due to uncareful handling of the precious factory output. Since many riots, including the big ones of Bhagalpur and Gonda, have started

with bomb attacks on processions, many Hindus believe that Muslims have started to manufacture bombs illegally. That may not be a *communalist prejudice*, for the owner of the factory, who died in the explosion (with three of his friends wounded) had at least a Muslim name.¹⁶⁰ In the same mohalla, *"nine countrymade bombs and a huge quantity of explosives were recovered"*.¹⁶¹

An article titled Anatomy of Carnage reports: *"In Ganj Dundwara in Etah, the spark was provided by a minor injury to a Muslim girl caught in a melee of 100-odd two- wheelers escorting BJP MP Uma Bharati."*¹⁶² So, this says that the Muslim girl had not been attacked, not even while Uma Bharati was *whipping up communal passions*, but then the Muslims retaliated to this non-attack by attacking the Hindu crowd. And in Hyderabad, *"the latest about of violence broke out after a leader of the Majlis- e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (MIM) was injured on December 5 following a private land dispute. Within minutes of his admission into hospital - [it] was not serious -- MIM supporters killed a Hindu traveling in an autorickshaw."* So, the dispute was neither communal nor serious, and then Muslims made it communal and serious by attacking and killing a non-involved Hindu.

While this article lists a number of riots that had a precise local cause, the whole wave of violence is attributed in one sweep to, of course, Ayodhya : *"There is no denying that the flames of communal hatred which scorched the towns of Uttar Pradesh and Hyderabad were the consequence of state impotence in responding to the message of revenge and hatred that echoed with every frenzied call for a Ram Mandir at Ayodhya."*

BJP leader V.K. Malhotra has aptly ridiculed this facile allegation in a speech in the Lok Sabha : *"The country has witnessed 2500 riots between 1950 and 1990. Godhra city had communal riots in 1947, 52, 59, 61, 65, 67, 72, 74, 80, 83, 89 and 90. Were all of these caused by the Rathyatra ?"* He pointed out that those who were painting a grim picture of the minorities being massacred, were doing a great disservice to the country and giving it a bad name. The fact was that 90% of the people killed in Hyderabad were Hindus. The riots in Delhi (Sadar Bazaar, on November 14) had been engineered by Muslims, as even the Shahi Imam had admitted (even while

the *report* by the Leftist IPF had sophisticatedly blamed economical rivalries and the Congress-I).¹⁶³ In Sambhal (Moradabad, U.P.) all those killed were Hindus, and yet the BJP was being blamed.

Mr. Malhotra also reminded his colleagues that the ex- chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, Chenna Reddy, and Andhra opposition leader N.T. Rama Rao had said that the BJP had had no role in the Hyderabad riots. That M.J. Akbar, spokesman of the Congress fact-finding team (some called it a *fault-finding team*), kept on blaming the BJP, only added to the widespread suspicion that a Congress faction had fomented the riots in order to make Chenna Reddy step down and make room for a Chief Minister more agreeable to the party leadership. The same explanation has also been given for the October riots in Karnataka, which had equally forced a Congress Chief Minister to step down.

On the U.P. riots, Mr. Malhotra said that they had been caused by the inflammatory speeches delivered by the Chief Minister: "*It was he who had asked Muslims all over the state to were these irresponsible utterances that caused the trouble in that state.*"¹⁶⁴

We may conclude that the whole business of blaming Hindu organizations and political parties has little to do with the actual responsibility. While this dirty and futile game may be forgiven to politicians, it is unacceptable from newsman and independent intellectuals. But it is not only the automatical blaming of the Hindutva organization that has lost its credibility. The blaming of politicians in general only touches the surface of the problem. It is quite possible that the Congress has used communal riots in order to get its own Andhra and Karnatka chief ministers replaced; and if is not true, at least some other party-political ploys are surely behind some of the riots. But then, that is only possible because a riotproneness already characterizes the communal co-existence in India. The unscrupled and cynical use of communal friction by politicians is bad enough, but this problem is just a parasite on the more fundamental problem: the communalism inherent in India's Hindu-Muslim relation.

11.4 Muslims and the police

The mutual enmity between the Muslim community and the police is a well-known feature of India's communal friction. Both parties say the other one always starts. This is what newspaper reports say: *"A head constable was killed in an assault in Mirzapur area [of Ahmedabad] while a brother of a constable was stabbed to death in Gomitpur area. Another person was also killed in stabbing... The head constable was stoned to death by a group of rioting mob..."*¹⁶⁵ Whatever the name of you- known-which community that stabs and stones policemen and their family members: at any rate, the police clearly have a point when they claim they are often put in a situation of pure self-defense.

In the Hyderabad violence, *"police were finding it difficult to enforce curfew in the lanes and by-lanes of the [predominantly Muslim] Old City. People on the roof- tops were pelting stones on the police. On Friday morning, about 200 people gathered... at around 11a.m. and began pelting stones at the houses of members belonging to one [i.e.Hindu] community, besides indulging in stabbing, looting and torching houses and shop. to quell this mob,police opened fire...resulting in the death of one person and injuries to three others. In view of the seriousness of the situation, police clamped curfew at around 12.30 p.m... By this time, nearly 15 persons had been stabbed."*¹⁶⁶

In Aligarh, *"miscreants spread the rumour that two constables had been stabbed by AMU student"*. These terrible rumour-mongers fortunately had it all wrong: *"Senior officials, however, said that the two constable were only beaten up with hockey sticks"*. Ah, so the aversion of Muslim students for policemen is not that bad after all. Even more reassuring is the explanation given by the AMU vice-chancellor, prof.M.N.Farooqi: *"The students have formed vigilance groups. One such group stopped two or three constables when they were entering the university in plain clothes. And a fight ensued."*¹⁶⁷ After stating that the AMU vigilance groups routinely beat up people dressed in plain clothes, he doesn't add what would have been the procedure if they had been in uniform. Stabbing instead of hockey sticks?

In fairness, Hindu students of BHU have also taken on the police, albeit only with some stone-throwing, and only after being *provoked* by a ban on

the demonstration they wanted to take out against the Aligarh killings. A lathicharge was enough to control the situation, and on one got killed.

In Aligarh however, the situation must have been very grim for the policemen, for they went to the unusual length of not resuming duty on October 13, after their two colleagues had been attacked. These attacks had by far not been the only ones, and now the policemen were not even allowed to defend themselves anymore. That at least is pro-Muslim. *"So he has ordered us not fire on them even as we are being attacked by them every day. We can't even fire in self-defense."* The policemen even quoted him as saying: *Go die, but don't kill.*¹⁶⁸

A BJP spokesman said that the violence in Aligarh had started when a Friday mob [i.e. coming from the mosque] assaulted a policeman and snatched his rifle. *"The violence spread to other areas of town including AMU, which has always been a hotbed of communalism."* The BJP spokesman, J.P.Mathur, also alleged that in Badaun two boys were caught throwing a bomb at a mosque and turned out to be Muslims: a genuine case of provocation. He also reported that a murderous assault had been made on BJP MP Uma Bharati, known for her fiery Ayodhya speeches.¹⁶⁹

Another version of the Aligarh eruption says that on December 7, *"some youths came out of a mosque after the Friday prayers and confronted a PAC picket in the Kotwali area. From all accounts the PAC overreacted, and thus began an orgy of violence..."* Thus ? We have not been told anything precise about how it began. What does *confronted* mean ? Further on in the article, about the same incident we read that *"when the PAC men were confronted by the Muslim youths, they first fired plastic bullets but resorted to firing when three of their men, including the senior superintendent of police, were injured."*¹⁷⁰ This makes sufficiently clear that the PAC had a point when they invoked self-defense as a legitimate ground for firing.

Nevertheless Muslim leaders and secularists go on blaming the police. Local Congress leader Haji Nooruddin said : *"Had the police shown a little more restraint, the slogan-shouting youths would have dispersed without any major damage."* From the reports, it is clear that the Muslims youths attacked the police. But even if Haji Nooruddin is right in equating this

attack with mere, we may remind him that according to Muslim and secularist commentators, slogan-shouting mechanically and irremediably (and therefore, excusably) *provokes* bomb- throwing or other lethal reactions. So these Muslim youths who *confronted* the police, even if it had been with mere slogans, should not complain ; just like the Hindu processionists who get killed by Muslim bombs without any secularist editorial to weep for them.

Janata Dal leader Ajit Singh reportedly charged the PAC with collusion [with the Hindus] and has questioned its presence "*in a cent per minority locality in Aligarh*". And he attributed the violence to Uma Bharati's speeches and L.K. Advani's Rathayatra. With that "*he indirectly admits that the minority community was provoked to attack first*", comments reader Sahil Brelvi. ¹⁷¹ And he adds a report of another riot : "*I was in Bareilly on December 7 and the facts ascertained from authentic sources and reported widely in the local newspapers point to a pre- planned mischief by the minority community, in collusion with the Janata Dal and the Left parties to teach a lesson to the VHP. The trouble started immediately after Friday prayers when the mob fanned out on a killing spree in all directions shouting **jihad**. One **crusader** snatched the rifle of a policeman on duty signaling the trouble and punitive action by the police.*" If Muslim bomb-throwing has to be glossed over on the ground that it was *provoked* by *slogans*, then why all this uproar about police action which, after all, has merely been *provoked* by *jihad* ?

So, rather than blaming the police, mr. Ajit Singh and many other secularists should answer mr. Brelvi's questions : "*Why the communal trouble starts on Fridays after jama prayers, as in Aligarh, Hyderabad and elsewhere ? How can the police succeed in flushing out the illegal arms and check the attackers without being posted on the troubled spot ? Why is it that illegal arms are mostly recovered from minority areas ?*" M. Brelvi also makes short work of the reports blaming the PAC : "*Not long ago in Meerut, the earlier reports of PAC 'excesses' in Maliana on the minority community were found baseless, when handgrenades and bullets with Pakistan Ordnance Factory markings were recovered by the same PAC.*"

And this is what happened in Kanpur on December 12 : "*In a major flare-up on Wednesday, armed mobs came on the roads in curfew-bound areas on Chamanganj and Beconganj following provocative speeches on loudspeakers mounted atop some religious places, and mounted an attack on a police picket at the Phoolmati trisection and surrounded the **Heerman ka Purwa** police outpost. According to [director-general of police] dr. R.P. Mathur, the police personnel facing the threat of being lynched or murdered, opened fire resulting in the death of four rioters and dispersal of others.*"¹⁷² So it is true that the police has killed Muslims. The statistics will correctly say that more Muslims than Hindus got killed : four to zero (though elsewhere in town some Hindus got stabbed to death). Yet, they have no one to blame but themselves.

So, there is no truth in the picture given by secularist commentators, that the PAC decided one day to start a *genocide* against the poor and defenseless Muslim community. That is not to say that police crimes and atrocities have never occurred.¹⁷³ But they cannot completely explain the systematic attack on the PAC by Muslim goondas on the streets and by secularists in the press.

A better explanation can be found in the statement by a Muslim leader to Tavleen Singh : "*Once Muslim feel that the state is not going to protect them and they are on their own, it is only a question of time before they start doing what the Sikhs are doing in Punjab. As it is, when we visit a town after a communal riot, people say : if the police wasn't there, we could take the Hindus on.*"¹⁷⁴ The militant Muslim want the PAC out of the way, to have their hands free.

And this is what Imam Bukhari has said : "*We will look after ourselves. Let there be a direct confrontation between communal forces. The world will witness the battle, but let the police forces keep out.*"¹⁷⁵ A section of the Students Islamic Movement (SIM) threatened *direct action* if a fresh attempt was made to touch the Babri Masjid.¹⁷⁶ Syed Shahabuddin declared that he could *understand* the young Muslim who had told him : "*Let us blow up this bridge, let us do something. If the state can kill us, we have the right to rebel against it.*"¹⁷⁷

On December 18, 1990, prominent members of the Indian Union Muslim League submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister, demanding, among many other things, the disbanding of the PAC and the constitution of a special anti-riot force with 30% Muslims. This more-than- proportional grip on the police is really the punch line. The demand to just get the police out of the way (voiced by Imam Bukhari and by Tavleen Singh's spokespersons) will not be readily conceded, so the next best thing is to get a friendly police. Of course, Muslim demands for a more-than-proportional reservation in a number of sectors of society were a central feature of pre-independence Muslim League politics, and we know to what it has led.¹⁷⁸

N.S. Saxena has devoted a two-part article to Riots in U.P. the questions.¹⁷⁹ He attacks the cheap explanations and cheap solution proposals that are being repeated again and again in the press as well as on the Lok Sabha floor. Thus, no matter how crude and inflammatory the rhetoric of Mulayam may have been, it has not pushed the number of riots and riot victims spectacularly higher than in other years. Under Mulayam's predecessors, U.P. was about equally riot-prone. Similarly, Advani's rathayatra, if at all a factor, has also not managed to make much of a difference. After all, U.P. was already riot-prone under the totally different administration in unpartitioned British India.

If we look for other factors that are now falsely mentioned as decisive, but that have not made a difference in the past, we see that in the ten years preceding independence, the percentage of Muslims in the U.P. police was 30 to 35%, and yet there were hundreds of riots every year. The *insecurity* among Muslims was so big that they opted for the creation of Pakistan. In the communal-riot-free year 1970, Muslims formed only 2% in the PAC.

SO, the solution for communal violence lies not in a communalist recruitment policy (reservations for Muslims in the police). The most immediate need is that all people guilty of communal violence in any of its stages be brought to book without exception. If riot-mongers do land in jail, they may not start again, and it may deter their colleagues. Also, riot investigation reports should be taken serious, instead of ending in a drawer. On the basis of real impartial investigation (instead of these partisan *fact-finding missions* with their all too convenient conclusions) and court

proceedings, fingers must also be pointed at the culprits behind the scene. The cloud around the communal identity of both killers and victims should go. Now, everyone thinks his community has suffered worst. There are even Muslims who believe that riots are mostly started by Hindus, and Muslim communalists actually stage dharnas to protest the communal violence which they themselves have fomented, without feeling ridiculous. At any rate, the truth must be told, the causes of the riots diagnosed without secretiveness, and the culprits should bear the consequences through judicial prosecution.

11.5. Who starts ?

One phase of the 1990 Aligarh violence was the attack on a train on December 8. *"Four passengers were killed when a 600-strong mob stopped the Gomti Express at Daud Khan near Aligarh, stoned the train and set on fire the Second Class bogey in which the passengers were traveling. Five passengers were also injured."*¹⁸⁰ The unofficial death toll was eleven. I have it from one of the passengers in that ill-fated train, that the attackers were a Muslim mob. Papers reported tellingly that an earlier attack on a train had been attempted *"close to a Muslim locality"*.¹⁸¹

The violence on November 7 had started, according to a Frontline report, with *"an attack on a group of people bound for Etah from the house of Manawwar Hussain, ex- chairman of the Nagar Palika, and from a nearby Masjid. A similar incident was reported on November 16"*.¹⁸² The police has lodged a criminal case against mr. Hussain.

We may as well continue to read this report : *"On December 4, the motorcade of the BJP MP, Uma Bharati, who was supposed to address a public meeting, was reportedly attacked from the house of Manawwar Hussein... Trouble started again on December 7 when some PAC men were attacked by a group of people belonging to the minority community while returning from a masjid in the Upper Court area. One of them snatched the rifle of a PAC jawan and stabbed him. The jawan's colleague who tried to save him, was also attacked. Bombs were reportedly thrown on the PAC*

men who retaliated by opening fire killing some of the assailants. The news spread like fire and clashes between the two communities began."

The same report quotes the vice-chancellor of AMU, Mohammed Nasim Farooqi, who traces the violence to the Ram Janmabhoomi issue : "*It is wrong to say that the minority community had a hand in the violence. Why should they be insecure when they are in the mainstream of public life ?*" He mistakenly links riot starting with the secularist concept of "*insecurity among the minorities*", as the standard explanation if not justification for all kinds of anti-social behaviour.¹⁸³ Instead of denying the proven facts of the Muslim initiative in every single round of the Aligarh violence, he should question his own dogma (now contradicted by the facts) that the secure Aligarh Muslims are incapable of starting riots ; this at least is what a man of scientific temper would do.

This report I have been quoting, was published in a secularist paper, and the reporter is in sympathy with the anti-PAC elements, as will be clear from the italicized words: "*The people's hatred for the PAC knows no bounds. They have been demanding for a long time that the PAC be removed*". But PAC men aver that once they go out the town would go up in flames. "*The PAC's presence is as good as its absence*", said one of the saner elements in the town." Our reporter, K. Kannan, thinks that the aversion against the *communalized* PAC has somehow remained uncommunalized, and that it is *the people* who want them to go. In fact, it is just the Muslims and the secularists who want to expel or disband the PAC.

So, here we have one more case of a press report giving facts that just don't allow any other explanation than that Muslims started the violence, and yet it ends with supporting the Muslim demands and blaming the police. While such a single case does not give a conclusive picture of who is most riot-prone, it does prove the tendency in the press to gloss over Muslim violence and to blame those who get blamed by *the* Muslims be they the police or L.K. Advani.

Let us formulate a working hypothesis for further research. Not using any esoteric information, just carefully reading the newspaper reports, I think there are strong indications that riots are in a majority of cases started by Muslims, often after Friday prayers ; that Hindus commit large-scale

reactive violence, mostly against weaker and less organized Muslim communities; and that the high incidence of confrontations between police and Muslims is also often started by Muslims, so that the police perceives its own action as self-defense.

These provisional conclusions are based on a limited number of cases. So they can be amended once positive proof for alternative generalizations is offered (but not earlier). However, these few riot reports and comments have furnished some striking cases of blatant distortion sneaking in on the way from *news* to *views*. When the report left no ambiguity about Muslims having started a riot, still the editorial (or even the peculiar terminology in the riot report) would blame the Hindus or the police.

If taken seriously, the systematic blaming of the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign for all the riots should make us very happy. Because, if all the riots are caused by this one factor, then that means that there are no longer any riots being caused by all the other factors that used to cause riots in the past. So, most riot factors have been eliminated : remove this one Ram factor, and there will be communal harmony. Unfortunately, the secularist *blame Ram* explanation has little to do with the real forces behind the continuing communal violence in India.

11.6. Riot strategy

As for the latter-stage attacks by Hindu goondas on innocent Muslim villagers, which took place in the huge riots of Bhagalpur 1989 and Gonda 1990, both in reaction to the initial attack by Muslims on a Hindu procession, these are equally hideous crimes as the original attack on the procession. But the responsibility for this stage of violence is shared with those who created the entire riot in the first place. For, there is a system in the seeming madness of Muslims starting a riot in which they know Muslims will be killed.

Syed Shahabuddin has once rhetorically asked how people could believe that riots are most often started by Muslims, when in fact substantially more Muslims get killed in riots than Hindus. Indeed, such suicidal behaviour

needs a good explanation. The paradox only exists when we accept Syed Shahabuddin's communalist assumption that it is *the* Muslims who get killed in riots. In reality, there are two very distinct groups of people involved: those who start riots, and those who bear the consequences.

Goondas have of course their own imponderable reasons for creating trouble. But the assumption we must make in order to make sense of crimes such as the communal riots, is that those who commit them expect some real benefit from them. Now the benefit that communalist politicians may expect from a riot in which people of their own community get killed, is quite substantial. It makes the ordinary people, who have no specific animosity against people of the other community, perceive the latter as the enemy. You thereby strengthen their feeling of being a community, in which the members have to depend on each other against a hostile environment. This can go as far as a physical migration from mixed neighbourhoods to *pure* ones. Moreover, you make them feel they need a strong protector: in politics the communalist MP or MLA, on the ground his goonda gang.

This scenario is not a hypothetical construction. It has been staged on a very large scale in 1946, when the Muslim League felt that it was not yet sufficiently supported by the common Muslims, and that the Hindus had not yet unambiguously conceded Pakistan. To convince the former that only the Muslim League and Pakistan could protect them, and to terrorize the latter into the big concession, the Muslim League government in Bengal organized a mass killing of Hindus (the Direct Action Day). They knew fully well that the Hindus would end up retaliating by killing innocent Muslims. Upon which more Muslims would kill Hindus, etc. The important effect was that Muslims suffered at the hands of the Hindus, lost all faith in co-existence with them, and joined hands with the communalist leaders. The pogroms against the Hindus caused a lot of deaths among the Muslim population, but for the Muslim League this brought resounding success.^{[184](#)}

This scenario is being repeated on a small scale in many of the communal riots in independent India. When in these riots Muslims get killed, it is at least partly owing to a design by another class of Muslims.

What makes creating riots even more attractive, is the sympathy you get for them from secularist politicians and intellectuals. When the Muslim

League killed thousands of Hindus in Calcutta, Congress leader Jawaharlal Nehru looked the other way. But when Hindu workers staying in Calcutta fled to their villages in Bihar and started killing Muslims there, the same Nehru proposed to bomb those villages from the air. When Hindus got killed, he didn't move a finger, but the killing of Muslims was enough to blow off his Gandhian facade and make him demand indiscriminate killing. When mass killing accompanied the Partition, mass killings which both sides equally committed, and for which the ultimate responsibility lay with those who had wanted Partition in the first place, communist writer Bhishma Sahni wrote the novel *Tamas*, in which the Hindus are painted as the villains.

When today Muslim goondas create a riot in Bhagalpur or in Gonda, the secularist press will obscure this beginning (in both cases bombs thrown from Muslim establishments at Hindu processions) and highlight the ensuing Hindu part of the violence. Some M.J. Akbar will poignantly describe the suffering of some Muslim villagers, and then blame the atmosphere created by the Rathayatra in some distant town, without even mentioning that the riot started with a pre-planned armed attack on a Hindu procession. That is how the secularists assure communal riot-mongers double fun : first the proper aim of the riot is achieved, and then on top of that, your very enemies are covered with abuse for provoking the riot.

Not only do you gain on the propaganda front, the press may even come out in support of your demands. For some time, Muslim communalists have demanded a ban on processions. More than 95% of religious processions are Hindu processions anyway, for processions are a thoroughly Pagan practice which in Islam can only be a heterodox oddity. Now, on 14 November 1990, Muslim communal groups together with Sikh communal groups took out a demonstration through Delhi's Sadar Bazaar, and went violent, killing several people. Oddly, the next day several editorials opined that this spate of violence proved the need for a *ban on processions*. The violent demonstration was a *sadbhavana yatra*, a *goodwill march*. It was of course no procession, in fact it had nothing to do with religion (it was neither a Sikh nor a Muslim festival, and they don't have common festivals anyway). And yet, the secularists have made it an occasion for support to

the Muslim communalists' long-standing demand for a ban on Hindu processions.

With its distorted representations of communal riots, with its guarantee to Muslim communalists that they will never get the full load of exposing and condemnation which they deserve, the secularist press, for all its bla-bla about communal harmony, is effectively giving a measure of encouragement to riot-fomenters.

11.7. A case study in riot comment

For one more example of secularist analysis of the riot problem, let us take a look at the article Making a Lebanon of India? by Prem Shankar Jha.¹⁸⁵ The article's object is to show that the more compromising position of the new Chandra Shakhur government towards the Ram Janmabhoomi campaigners, has been the cause of more communal riots than V.P. Singh's and Mulayam Singh Yadav's confrontationist policy had been (P.S. Jha had been V.P. Singh's spokesman). It advocates a hard stand against the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and all that goes with it.

"For four years, the VHP has sown the wind of communal hatred. We are now reaping the whirlwind. In a sustained blast of propaganda, each and every real or fancied grievance of the Hindus has been pulled out of the closet and aired till it has begun to look respectable." For almost a century, Muslim communal groups have been articulating their demands mostly in terms of grievances. If four years can make us reap a whirlwind, what about forty years, or ninety ? For more than a thousand years, every Muslim has been drilled in the belief that all non-Muslims are his enemies, that he should fight them, because Allah has said so dozens of times in the Quran and the Prophet has set this example. If four years of propaganda can make us reap a whirlwind, what about a thousand years ?

Here come the *real or fancied* Hindu grievances. Referring to an article by mr. K.R. Malkani, member of the BJP national executive, mr. Jha sums up : *"India was partitioned on Muslim insistence. India is having to spend thousands of crores of rupees every year on defending itself against*

'Islamic' Pakistan. Every census shows a Muslim population growth well above the national average. They would not agree to a uniform civil law, commended by the Constitution. The Muslim would not agree to the relocating of a mosque or grave -- to widen a road or right an old wrong -- something common in Muslim countries. And on top of all this, they are complaining all the time." This propaganda it is, that has been causing communal riots, according to mr. Jha.

Actually, each of the contentions made by mr. Malkani, are pure fact. Of course India was partitioned on Muslim insistence, no amount of history-rewriting can change that. Of course this partition and the immediate invasion by Pakistan in Kashmir, has forced India to spend a lot on defense. It is a fact verifiable from the census figures that the percentage of Muslims has been constantly rising since 1881, in British India, in Pakistan, in India, and in Bangla Desh, in each of these states and in each decade without exception.¹⁸⁶ It is a fact that the leaders of the Muslim community, supported by many secularists, have defended the Shariat as the sole Muslim personal law, and go on refusing the implementation of the constitutional recommendation of a common civil code. It is a fact that in at least one case, *the* Muslims have been refusing the relocation of a mosque structure. And it is a fact that they are complaining all the time, witness the papers of each of the Muslims parties big and small.

In this complaining, they are supported by secularists like mr. Jha. Further down he writes : *"Muslims too have their grievances against the majority community, several of which have far more substance than those articulated by mr. Malkani."* Personally, I think that mr. Malkani has not even mentioned the most serious grievances of the Hindus. Anyway, let's hear those of the Muslims.

Muslims are poor, under-represented in the bureaucracy, the armed forces and the private corporate sector, over- represented in unemployment, and very vulnerable to the effects of riots when self-employed as craftsmen or shopkeepers.

These are grievances, but are they *"grievances against the majority community"* ? Where Muslims live together with other communities, they are often the poorer community, even if they are in power and declare an

Islamic republic. In Malaysia, the non-Muslim Chinese are far better off than the Muslim Malays. In Egypt, the Copts are a prosperous business community, though they often live in fear of the poorer Muslim majority. Muslim poverty in India is largely due to factors unrelated to the Hindus, such as large families, little education (these two are related), and the fact that many rich Muslims in 1947 chose Pakistan. It is a socialist mistake that economic inequality is the "fault" of the government (here assumed to be a largely Hindu government).

The educational backwardness of the Muslims is again not the fault of the Indian Constitution and laws, which give all due safeguards and even privileges, it is not the fault of other communities. But the educational backwardness itself is the single largest factor in the Muslims' underrepresentation in the bureaucracy and the corporate private sector, and their high unemployment rate. That it is not the Hindus who keep the minority underrepresented in any sphere, can be proven from the situation of the other minorities : Sikhs are quite *over-represented* in government and army posts, Christians in education, Parsis and Jains in business.

That Muslim shopkeepers are very vulnerable during riots, is a fact. It also counts for Hindu shopkeepers. But I agree with Mr. Jha that Muslim craftsmen and traders have been singled out for attacks and destruction of their trade equipment in many communal riots, the motive being more economical than communal.

Now the riots themselves. Mr. Jha says that Rajasthan hardly knew any riots until October 1989. The blame is of course on the VHP. They came in with their propaganda "*in preparation of the centenary year of Dr. Hedgewar, founder of the RSS*", so before 1989. They were followed by *Muslim activists* who "*began to sensitize the Muslim masses of the threat that the Ram Janmabhoomi posed to their religion*". Can you believe it ? This secularist is repeating, without any distancing or questioning, the BMAC claim that *Islam is in danger* due to the Ram Janmabhoomi ; a danger to which the *Muslim masses* have to be *sensitized*. Anyway, these *Muslim activists* began arriving as late as 1988. And by the time they were all there, in 1989, the communal riots started.

Then Mr. Jha sets out to disprove the Hindu assumption that nine out of ten riots are started by Muslims.¹⁸⁷ He gives the list of communal clashes between 1 p.m. of 29 October, and 6 p.m. of 30 October, a time-span of 29 hours. No doubt he carefully selected a time favourable to his case. He could have chosen any of the days of the Hyderabad carnage, or any Friday, to disprove his own suggestion that Hindus are more riot-prone. But no, Mr. Jha wants to pull our attention away from those more representative occasions, and towards this one day when he counted more Hindu than Muslim violence.

In different places in Karnataka, four Muslims were attacked, one of whom died, some Muslim property was set on fire, an attempt to damage a mosque was stopped by the police, and an Idgah was damaged. A one-sided struggle, indeed, but no proof that Hindus are just as good at starting trouble : communal violence had been going on in the state, not too intense but rather widespread, for most of October. Mr. Jha has merely selected a time when it was the Hindus' turn.

In Andhra, a *person* was assaulted, and a workshop belonging to a *Muslim* was burnt. Since *Muslims* are named as such, can we make an inference about the religion of the *person* ? Further, a Muslim was killed and an Idgah and a Dargah attacked. Then follow a number of explosions and acts of arson not specified as to community, which experienced readers tend to see as a strong pointer in a certain direction.

In Jaipur, a Hindu succumbed to his injuries, stones were thrown at a mosque, a Muslim was assaulted, a Muslim's shop set on fire. Alleged BJP/VHP workers set four (empty) State buses on fire. A Muslim was stabbed and two Dargahs desecrated.

In Ahmedabad, police *had to open fire*, killing a Hindu. A mosque was damaged, two Muslims set on fire, of whom one died. In Baroda, two bodies of Hindus were recovered. "*Two Muslims were Killed and four injured in police firing*", an event bracketed with an anonymous "*spate of stabbing, mercifully not fatal*" (the toning-down and the anonymity are unmistakable pointers). Elsewhere, "*the police had to open fire on another mob, and one Hindu was killed*". When Hindus get killed, it is because the police had no choice but to fire on the *mob*. But when a Muslim gets killed,

it is a different story : *"No one needs to be reminded of the outrage committed on Muslims by the PAC in Meerut, Bhagalpur, or now in Aligarh"*. About Aligarh, I have fairly complete information, and it is quite clear that the PAC was the target of unsolicited attack by Muslim *mobs* on several occasions.

I cannot check the correctness and especially the completeness of this overview of a day of riots. Though following the national press closely, including the paper in which mr. Jha's article appeared, I have not heard of a number of these incidents. But I have heard of ten or so more people killed (and an unknown number injured) in communal violence during the 29 hours under consideration, in a very well-known incident : the shooting of unarmed Kar Sevaks in Ayodhya by the infantry of the ruling secularist sect, around noon on 30 October. In spite of mr. Jha's attempt to conceal it, most victims on his chosen day were Hindus, not Muslims. Apart from that, one cannot fail to notice that mr. Jha's interpretation of what happened and the terminology he uses, are far from neutral.

"Throughout the weeks that preceded the Kar Seva, the pattern had remained unvarying from day to day. While miscreants of both communities were active, the majority of the attacks took place on Muslims. There was a pattern to the sustained provocation: mosque were attacked, Idgahs and Dargahs desecrated, provocative and insulting slogans shouted, until mayhem broke loose." Like so many times before, a secularist builds up this pre-riot crescendo, all the way up to the *provocative slogans* stage, and then disappoints the reader by hiding in a cloud of impersonal vagueness : *Mayhem broke loose*. What does he have to hide ? If the slogans were provocative, does it mean that they effectively *provoked* violence ? In that case, the implication would be that the violence came from the other side. And that is precisely what so many riot reports suggest : when Hindus appear in public and do something that some Muslim care to consider *provocative*, they get a violent welcome.

And in fact, mr. Jha almost concedes as much. If not in October, then certainly in December. He says that the Muslim youth *"have slipped the leash of their elders, and decided, as they see it, to defend themselves. The lumpen and the criminals belonging to the Muslims have therefore come*

into their own. That is why the death toll is so high now. For unlike October, both sides are now [mid-December] indulging in retributory murder."

According to Mr. Jha, the reason for the increasing resort to armed struggle among the Muslim youth, is that the unflinching defense of the Babri Masjid by V.P. and Mulayam, had been replaced with a policy of "*compromise with Hindu communalism*". Chandra Shekhar was in effect pressuring the Muslims into giving up the Babri Masjid, or so it seems to these Muslim youngsters.

And now that he was working out a compromise, rather than taking a 100% pro-Muslim and 100% anti-Hindu stand, the country will have to face the consequences : "*Worse, far worse, is yet to come. Hot-heads among the Muslim youth are already saying that the only way to deal with the PAC is with AK-47s. They are talking of dying with honour rather than waiting to be extinguished. The search for Ak-47s may well have begun, and the first signs of a link-up with Sikh extremists have already appeared.*"

So, the Janmabhoomi campaign is not taking India towards Ram Rajya, but towards "*another Lebanon, Cyprus or Ethiopia, a country torn apart by unending civil war*". Incidentally, the comparisons are telling. In Lebanon, the civil war started as an attempt by the Christians to stop the progressive take-over of their country by the Palestinians (who had tried this before in Jordan, but had been driven out). In Cyprus, it started with a Muslim demand for a partition and a larger-than-proportionate piece of the territory, which they got, by force. Ethiopia is more complex, involving Communist as well as Muslim separatism in Eritrea and a decade of Communist misrule and oppression.

But let us mention the more straightforward case of Sudan, which Mr. Jha somehow overlooked even though it is as much tormented by communal violence as Lebanon is. In Sudan, a Muslim majority in the North has imposed the Shariat on the non-Muslim South. Faced with this Islamic oppression, the non-Muslim Dinkas and other peoples in the South want a separate secular state. With Libyan aid, the Muslim North fights an all-out war to keep the South down. When Muslims are in a minority, they want

partition; but when it is a non-Muslim minority that wants a separate state, the Muslim rulers don't let their booty escape.

What is the practical conclusion of this article ? Does it condemn the people who take up arms because they don't like a political compromise on Ayodhya worked out by a democratic government ? No, it wants the Hindus to make the concessions demanded by those who threaten with Ak- 47s. Mr. Jha writes in his conclusion that "*the only way to tackle communalism is to tackle it head on, never, never compromise with it... Compromising with the aggressor gives him legitimacy... Thus, paradoxically, compromise hardens positions, increases self- righteousness, and raises the level of violence in society.*" I agree with him, but for me that implies the opposite of what it implies for him. He thinks it means no compromise with a basically non-violent mass-movement for the symbolic redress of an old crime, systematically inflicted on Hindu society by invaders who came with the medieval equivalents of AK-47s. For him, it also means a pre-emptive compromise with those who may take to the AK- 47 in the near future, in order to deal with the police force and the *majority community*.

In my opinion, an essential part of any successful anti- riot policy is that no compromise whatsoever is made with those who start or threaten riots. If they find they can extract concessions by starting or threatening riots, they are encouraged to continue and perfect this strategy. It must be made clear to riot-mongers that their strategy will not yield them anything. The Shah Bano decision, the ban on The Satanic Verses and other books, the non-recognition of the Hindu rights over Ram Janmabhoomi, have all been obtained by Muslim extremists by means of actual or threatened *agitation*. All these concessions to extremist threats have encouraged the same extremists to continue stoking violence for new demands.

In autumn 1990, they knew perfectly well that riots would be used by the secularist press to blacken the BJP/VHP and to intensify its opposition against the Ram Mandir. When we see who gets systematically blamed by the press and the politicians for any and every riot, then we know who has no objective interest in fomenting riots. And when we see who gets all the sympathy, and the support for their demands, whenever riots occur, we know who has an objective interest in continuing the riots.

A very good illustration is the next and very important demand of the Muslim communalists : a larger than proportionate reservation for Muslims in the army and the police. With every clash between Muslims and the PAC, we see secularists plead for the disbanding of the PAC, and the granting of reservations of the Muslims (*the minorities*, as they say), either in the existing forces or in a new anti-riot force, amounting to some 25% or even 30%. In other words, we see those who started the carnage in Bhagalpur '89, in Gonda '90, in Aligarh '90, in Hyderabad '90, being rewarded with secularist support for their demands, and more support with every riot.

11.8. Hindu riots

For good measure, I must not let the Hindu riot-mongers go scot-free either. In the typical riot cases where Hindus merely react to attacks by some Muslims, it is certainly possible to keep the quantity of violent revenge at a lower level than is now the case. If the Hindu organizations, when a communal crisis breaks out, immediately apply themselves to limiting the damage, immediately move in to calm people down and to effectively prevent the anti-social elements in their own ranks from attacking Muslims, then the death toll could be far lower. I have so far never heard from a Hindu activist being thrown out of these Hindu organizations for irresponsible and violent behaviour. Yet, such miscreants certainly exist, and if the RSS etc. fail to stop them or to formally punish them, these organizations are co-responsible.

A plea which these Hindu organizations often make, is that goondas with no affiliation to the VHP, RSS or BJP, merely use the riot, after others have started it, to get their share of looting and raping. I cannot judge in what percentage of the cases that this was what happened^{[188](#)}, but suppose that it really goes like that. Even then a determined move to restore order and discipline within all sections of the local Hindu community would make a substantial difference. That this is not being done on anything like a sufficient scale, is clear to me from the fact that the apologetic literature^{[189](#)} of the RSS, while making a rather strong case for this organization's non-riot-prone character, does hardly say anything about the constructive role

they have or have not played in the process of stopping the violence once it has started, or in the healing process afterwards.^{[190](#)}

In my opinion, the virginity which the RSS spokesmen claim concerning the start of riots, and their unimpressive record (relative to their numbers and level of discipline and organization) in actively intervening to stop violence against Muslims^{[191](#)}, are the result of one and the same fact concerning the RSS: it is not a militant organization of vanguard troopers (as they are portrayed by some secularists who like to clamour about *Hindu fascism*), but an organization of quite ordinary people, shopkeepers and schoolboys, who have no inclination to start real fights or to enter the battlefield once the fight has started, even as peace- makers.

While RSS workers are killed by the dozens by the Khalistani terrorists (and/or by Pakistani provocateurs dressed as Sikhs), we never hear of any violent retaliation. This lack of retaliation is not just because of a policy of not aggravating tension between *Sikh Hindus* and *other Hindus*, but simply because the RSS doesn't have the capability to strike. Incidentally, this frustrates the Khalistani and Pakistani calculations : believing the secularist propaganda about the RSS as a *fascist militia* ready to terrorize *the minorities*, they had hoped to get another *Direct Action Day* going, with mutual killing of common Hindus and Sikhs.

Apart from reactive violence against Muslim attacks, the Hindu groups cannot disown some cases of unprovoked aggression on their own part. While the Rathyatra had been peaceful, mr. Advani's arrest was the occasion for a more grim and militant line of action on the part of BJP workers. In Jaipur, the Bharat bandh on October 24 generated a series of riots.

As any communist or trade-unionist can tell you, a strike is seldom a collectively voluntary action. Most often, a motivated minority forces the strike on the majority. In the Bharat bandh also, the BJP workers went around the city to check that all the shopkeepers downed their shutters. According to their own explanation, a shopkeeper refused to comply with their demand that he close his shop, took out a gun and shot at them. And that was the beginning of a week of communal violence. If one analyzes the

responsibility, one might say that the demand to close shop was an encroachment on the shopkeeper's constitutional rights : already more of a *provocation* than the legitimate though insensitive use of free speech to utter *provocative slogans*. That doesn't justify the use of firearms yet.

The readiness to retaliate against the most defenseless classes among the Muslims, in reaction to well-planned Muslim goonda violence, betrays that trait stereotypically attributed by Muslims to Hindus : cowardice (not that the Islamic behaviour of throwing bombs at processions is all that courageous). But it also betrays two things about which the Hindu organizations can readily do something : despair, and a lack of education. It is out of despair that people attack just whoever they can get, feeling that they can not leave the Muslim attacks without a fitting reply.

This irrational tendency to take revenge on just anyone belonging to the Muslim community, can only be cleared away through education. The short-term necessity in solving the riot problem is a more effective police force and most of all an effective judicial prosecution of the culprits (which implies breaking through the nexus of politicians and criminals). But the long-term necessity for reducing the communal violence is education.

I don't mean *education* with moralistic campaigns to tell them not to do such ugly things, sadbhavana yatras and human chains for communal amity : those things only convince the already-convinced, and they have no impact once a crisis breaks out. What Hindu leaders should teach their followers (and first of all imprint on their own minds), is that *the* Muslims are not to blame for communal violence. Even when it is established that a far more than proportionate amount of the communal violence emanates from Muslim quarters, it should still be upheld as dogma that the Muslim people are not to blame.

"*The Muslims*" are just people like the rest of us, but they happen to be open to the influence of the Quranic ideology propagated by Islamic religious personnel. In fact, the common Muslim is hardly aware of Islamic theology. For him, being a Muslim means being what he himself is. And for him, *the Muslim* are not so much the followers of Mohammed, but simply the community to which he belongs. And he will intensify his bond with his community whenever it is in confrontation, offensively or defensively, with

another community. Not because of a theology of Momins vs. Kafirs, but out of a natural tribal instinct. Unfortunately, there are leaders who take these common people with them, in actions inspired by this theology of which the common people know so little.

The common Hindu has so often heard of or been confronted with Muslim violence, that he has come to associate Muslims with violence. On the other hand, he is taught by his leaders to only see the face value of this violence, not the ideology behind it. An RSS man told me that one day Guru Golwalkar gave a speech, saying that *Mohammed was a great prophet*, and that *Islam is a great religion*, but that, inconsequentially, *the Muslims are big fools*. What nonsense : the one thing that defines Muslims as a group, is their adherence to Islam and the Prophet. How can you make a collective allegation against *the Muslims* if you first praise that which makes them into one collectivity ?

One should look for the reason for the apparently typical Muslim proneness to riots, in that which defines the Muslim collective identity, the Islamic ideology. It would have been more fair, and historically more accurate, to explain Muslim violence by saying that *the Muslims are our brethren*, but they or their leaders are mentally in the fangs of "*Islam, that religion of jihad*" created by "*Mohammed, that prophet of icon-breaking*". That way, you distinguish between the human and the ideological level, and then you can educate the people and make them see the key formula that will take the sting out of Hindu vengefulness against their Muslim countrymen : the problem is not the Muslims, the problem is Islam.

Of course, once a procession is being attacked, it is too late to say to the crowd : "*Hey, don't attack the Muslims, attack Islamic ideology*". At that time, they are confronted with a physical enemy, and they will react physically. However, in the longer run, some education in comparative religion is the solution, or at least a central part of the solution.

Today, Hindus have to swallow all kinds of negative image-building concerning Hinduism. Islam, by contrast, is depicted as a liberator from inequality, a religion of peace and brotherhood, and more such fictional terms of praise. But then, after being fed all these nice things about Islam, they find that their procession is being attacked by Muslims. This anomaly

they cannot understand. So they are left to the immediacy of the situation, and even afterwards they cannot comprehend what happened, as long as they are not informed about Islamic doctrine.

Well, some secularist Swami may tell them that all prophets are great, that it is only their followers who err. In fact, this sweet little lie is the worst contributor to the communal violence on the Hindu side : it is not true that the Muslims *err* and "*mis-apply the teachings of that great prophet Mohammed*". Most of them just follow the lead given by fanatical Imams, and these fanatical Imams can at worst only be blamed for *not erring* and *fully applying* the doctrine of the Prophet. So, Hindus should know that these Muslims are only sincerely applying the teachings of the real culprit of most of the communal violence in India : Mohammed.

There is every reason to tell them the truth about Islam. Hinduism should not be painted in rosy colours, but evaluated in a fair and truthful way. The treatment Islam receives, should be the same. Now, a fair and truthful presentation of Islam will include : the absolute inequality of believer and unbeliever, the boundless self-righteousness of the Prophet and the believers who imitate him, the crudely physical nature of the Islamic precepts (the complete lack of a consciousness dimension), the strongly political and anti-secularist objectives of Islam, and the logical absurdity of the very idea of prophethood.

Once this distinction between Muslim human beings and anti-human Islamic doctrine is clear in people's minds, you can demand from them a Gandhian self-restraint in the face of terrible provocation. When your procession gets attacked, you will still not set the Muslims' shops on fire. This distinction between the ideas working through some people, who in turn can set entire crowds and gangs in motion, and on the other hand the people themselves, will make a crucial difference.

Secondarily, the curbing of Hindu retaliation will also have its effect on the propagandistic and political front. At present every riot, regardless what the facts and who the victims, is held up as a proof of the *rabid* and *fascist* character of the *Hindu communal forces* who are *stirring the communal cauldron*. The secularist agitprops should be starved of every semblance of evidence. In this respect, it is better to get killed than to kill.

Or at least, anything is better than to kill innocents. Against terrorists, using force is the most effective way to stop them, because it is the language they understand. But that job should be left to the legitimate security forces.

This work at the level of thought should also deal with the communal attitudes that have crept into Hinduism during its confrontation with the Muslim onslaught. Islamic thought has deeply influenced the Indian intelligentsia, including champions of Hindutva. Thus, Dayananda Saraswati espoused monotheism, denounced idol-worship, and treated the Veda like a revealed, complete and final Scripture. V.D. Savarkar thought that Hindus have to borrow forms of organization and lifestyle from the Muslims in order to overcome them. He has been accused by the secularists (and with him, the entire Hindutva movement) of reducing Hindu identity to an *us vs. them* pattern of enmity against the Muslims. The secularists correctly denounce such an attitude, while glossing over the fact that this enmity is intrinsic to Islamic doctrine, and has only crept into Hinduism reactively, during the long self-defense of Hindu society against Islam. Anyway, they do have a point when they perceive this enmity as a strong factor in the current activist Hindu identity.

So, Hindus should weed out these Islamic attitudes of *us against them* from their thought. Their Hindu identity should not be centered around their attitude towards another doctrine, but on Hinduism's own genius and effectiveness as a cultural framework for social integration and individual happiness.¹⁹² And they should not define people in terms of their communal identity, which is but the Islamic game of judging people on their being Momins or Kafirs, rather than on their merits. Unlike Islam, they should dis-identify and distinguish human being from the religion they profess ; so that, if ever the need arises, they can attack and expose Islamic doctrine without any mental or physical hostilities with the Muslim people.

To sum up, the *communal problem* in India is largely the *Muslim problem*, or rather, the *Islam problem*. Islam is communal through and through, preaching a total abyss between its own community members and the rest of humanity. So, very generally, the cause of communal riots is Islam. The cure is Sanatana Dharma. It teaches that everything is generated

by thought. While seemingly a difficult notion, in this context it is very easy to understand : the physical problem of communal riots is but the materialization of communal thinking. This communal thinking should be identified : its most potent and consistent form is the Islamic doctrine of the struggle between Momin and Kafir. Other communalisms like Sikh separatism and the anti-Muslim animus among some Hindu people, are but the indirect effects of this Islamic doctrine. Then, this communal thinking should be removed through dialogue and education. No matter what law and order measures will further be needed before the age of communal riots is over, at any rate it is this work at the level of thought which will ultimately solve the problem.

11.9. Riots in Muslim countries

In order to keep an assessment of riot patterns in perspective, we should compare with the situation in Pakistan and Bangla Desh. The general pattern there is :

1. Roughly 100% of Hindu-Muslim riots are started by Muslims.
2. Roughly 100% of the victims in the actual communal confrontation are Hindus.
3. Those few times the police intervenes, it does have the decency to stop the attackers rather than their fleeing victims, so the vast majority of those killed in police firing on the occasion of riots, are Muslims. But like in India, the police often fails to intervene, which may get interpreted as a form of passive connivance with the majority community.

The secularist theory that there is no ideological (as opposed to socio-economical) explanation for the different degree of riot-proneness between the different religions, and their denial of this very difference, both fall apart when called on to explain the riot pattern in the Islamic republics that used to be parts of India. If Muslims are not more riot-prone than Hindus, then why do you never ever hear of a Hindu attack on mosques in Bangla Desh, but a lot of the reverse ? Or, for that matter, why not Christian attacks on mosques, even while Christians do get their share of attacks and

harassments from the Muslims? In these Muslim-majority countries, communal violence is a completely one-directional affair. Even when Muslims destroyed hundreds of Hindu temples on the pretext of protest against the Shilanyas in Ayodhya, there has not been any report of similar retaliation by the Hindus.

We may safely say that in Bangla Desh, the Muslim participation in the starting of riots, is more than their percentage of the population : about 100% as against some 87%. In Pakistan also, even though Muslims form about 97% (including Ahmadiyas) of the population, they still manage to have an even larger share in the starting of riots.

The secularist theory that whatever slight Muslim over- representation in riot-starting they are willing to concede, is attributable to the *insecurity* to which Muslims are subjected, can also not hold. Firstly, in India there are minorities who simply don't start riots (Jains, Parsis), or only few (Christians), and yet they are fewer in number than the Muslims and consequently more *insecure*. Secondly, in Pakistan, Bangla Desh and Malaysia they have Islamic republics, and still that doesn't stop them from maltreating the non-Muslims and attacking their places of worship on the slightest pretext. Moreover, within Pakistan there are also a lot of attacks by the majority Sunnis on minority Shias and Ahmadiyas, and that again cannot be attributed to *insecurity*.

As a general rule, in communal conflicts the world over, you will find majorities attacking minorities, seldom the reverse. Have you ever heard of pre-1940 Jews attacking the German or Polish majorities in Central Europe ? Have you ever heard of the Coptic minority in Egypt attacking the Muslim majority ? They form about 6% of the population, but furnish 0% of the riots and other forms of harassment. And have you ever heard of the Hindu minorities in South Africa, the UK, Singapore, the US, starting riots ?

But in India, you do see one of the minorities on the offensive even where it is clearly outnumbered. Even if their percentage of starting riots was only proportional to their percentage of the population, i.e. about 12% (and no secularist so far has been dishonest enough to suggest this), then that would still be more than what minorities elsewhere, and especially in

Islamic countries, would dare to do. It becomes hard to evade the conclusion that there is something in Islamic doctrine that incites people to non-integration and even violent struggle with their neighbours.

Chapter 12. Book Banning

12.1. BAnning All That Hurts

In the same week when the Kar Seva was due, the speaker of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, H.K. Srivastava, made a proposal to attack the problem of communal friction at what he apparently considered its roots. He wanted all press writing about the historical origins of temples and mosques to be banned. And it is true : the discussion of the origins of some mosques is fundamental to this whole issue. For, it reveals the actual workings of an ideology that, more than anything else, has caused countless violent confrontations between the religious communities.

However, after the news of this proposal came, nothing was heard of it anymore. I surmise that the proposal was found to be juridically indefensible in that it effectively would prohibit history-writing, a recognized academic discipline of which journalism makes use routinely.^{[193](#)} And I surmise that it was judged politically undesirable because it would counterproductively draw attention to this explosive topic.

The real target of this proposal was the book *Hindu Temples : What Happened to Them (A Preliminary Survey)* by Arun Shourie and others. In the same period, there has been a proposal in the Rajya Sabha by Congress MP Mrs. Aliya to get this book banned, in spite of the fact that about half the book had already legally been published in different papers. The police dropped by the printer and later the publisher to get a few copies for closer inspection.

The really hard part of the book is a list of some two thousand Muslim buildings that have been built on places of previous Hindu worship (and for which many more than two thousand temples have been demolished). In spite of the threat of a ban on raking up this discussion, on November 18 the U.P. daily Pioneer has published a review of this book, by Vimal Yogi Tiwari, which I reproduce here in full.

The book is a collection of articles written by Arun Shourie, dr. Harsh Narain, Jay Dubashi, Ram Swarup and Sita Ram Goel. It is perhaps the first endeavor on the part of scholars to dig from the graveyard of history the identity of some 2000 temples destroyed by the Muslim invaders and rulers. The book is not an exercise in rewriting history, but is an effort to present the facts and give a bird's eye view of the truth hitherto unknown. The book has as its subject matter not only the Ram temple at Ayodhya but nearly 2000 temples throughout the length and breadth of the country which met the same fate as that of Ayodhya, Mathura and Varanasi.

The revealing articles provide the readers with an insight into the history and nature of the problem the Hindus have faced and continue to face. The list of temples destroyed or desecrated helps to nail down the big lie, propagated by some historians, that Muslim raiders and rulers plundered temples only for the wealth. There may have been a few rich temples, otherwise most temples must have been as poor in the past as they are now.

The book does not furnish great details for the simple reason that it is just a preliminary survey. Yet the facts are very revealing and go a long way in clearing the clouds of doubts which have been purposely woven around the facts. It lists some 2000 sites where temples were destroyed and mosques were built. Not only were the temples destroyed but even their material was used in constructing mosques at those places. This was plainly done to hurt the sentiments of the Hindus.

"History is not just an exercise in collection of facts though, of course, facts have to be carefully sifted and authenticated as Mr. Sita Ram Goel has done in this case. History is primarily an exercise in self-awareness and reinforcement of that self-awareness. Such a historical assessment has by and large been missing in our country. This at once gives special significance to this book."

By December 1990, a ban on this kind of historical writing seemed out of the question. By that time, especially after Indian Express published dr. S.P. Gupta's convincing article on the archaeological findings in Ayodhya, both prime minister Chandra Shekhar and Congress leader Rajiv Gandhi said the archaeologists should have a say in the Ram Janmabhoomi issue. Therefore, at least that one contentious Muslim construction was open to scrutiny.

Still, just like Doordarshan censors out all news that could harm harmony, many secularists would like to ban all writings attributing any systematic misbehaviour to one community (except the Hindus, who can be unreservedly accused of instituting untouchability, forcing widows on the funeral pyre, and worse even, being communal). On top of that, they also want books that might *hurt the feelings* of a community, to be banned.

The best known case where this was effectively done is, of course, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. This book was banned in India immediately after its publication in England, as part of a deal with the Babri Masjid Action Committee to call off a Muslim march on Ayodhya. The book makes fun of a fictional character, Mahound (and of other people as well). However, the writer's contention that the story was entirely imaginative and fictional, is not sustainable. Mahound was a deformed version of Mohammed's name, used in Christian polemical writings against the *pseudo-prophet*.¹⁹⁴ The women in a brothel described in the book, bear the names of the wives of the historical Mohammed, in order to attract clients. There is just no denying that the writer is making gory fun of the Prophet.

Nevertheless, is that a reason for banning the book? When some Hindus wanted a ban on the TV serial *Tipu Sultan*, for its glorifying and whitewashing a cruel fanatic who had destroyed temples and forcibly converted people, this was dubbed bigoted. Even the fact that it contained blatant distortion of history (which with some common sense can easily be distinguished from mere dramatization of history), was not counted as a sufficient reason for keeping it off the TV screen (which would still not be a wholesale ban). When some Hindus wanted a ban on Ambedkar's *Riddles in Hinduism*, for its pathetic allegations against Rama and Krishna, this was termed Hindu chauvinism. Even the protest against the republication of the book with state funds was to no avail, and the book has been ceremoniously presented to foreign visitors in the Ambedkar centenary year including Nelson Mandela. So, Hindu demands for a ban are to be ignored.

But Muslim demands to curb free speech and freedom of artistic expression, should they be conceded? According to secularists, yes. Khushwant Singh defended the ban.¹⁹⁵ M.J. Akbar defended the ban. Even

Girilal Jain, then editor of the Times of India, defended the ban, arguing that otherwise it would only bring a lot of riots and damage to property. The weekly Sunday published excerpts from the book, and was condemned for that by the Press Council, in November 1990. It consequently offered apologies to any readers who might have felt hurt.¹⁹⁶

When the death sentence against Rushdie was pronounced by the Ayatollah Khomeini, on February 14, 1989, many secularists advised Rushdie to apologize and to withdraw the book. When people got killed in demonstrations against the book, the secularists blamed Rushdie, not the BMAC, not Khomeini, not their own implicit or explicit support to the anti-Rushdie agitation. And many secularists of the not too intelligent variety have tried to downplay the affair by arguing totally beside the point that the ban didn't matter much, since hardly any Indian can read Rushdie's English.¹⁹⁷

The good thing discussion on Islam going. Especially Khomeini's fatwa made people ask: is this really Islamic? Of course, some liberals, Muslim and non-Muslim, came out to say that the death sentence against Rushdie was un-Islamic. You know, *the tolerance which Islam inculcates, doesn't allow this*, etc. But their misgivings about the fatwa were put to rest by competent authorities.

Shortly after the debate was sparked, the Islamic Research Foundation published two Urdu books defending the fatwa: "*JNU professor Maulana Mohsin Usmani Nadwi's Ahaanat-i Rasool ki Sazaa (Punishment for Criticizing the Prophet)*, and Maulana Majid Ali Khan's *Muqaddas-i Ayat (The Sacred Verses)*. Their point was very simple: in this case there is absolutely no scope for doubt, Rushdie must be killed. Firstly, he is effectively an apostate. In fact, he himself has said that much. He once described how he decided to break with Islam. He was still a teenager, and he went to a fast-food place and ordered pork pie and a portion of shrimps. Were they tasty! In a statement written months after the fatwa, from his *Muslim*". For him that doesn't mean he is an apostate, for he was made a Muslim as a child, and that doesn't count. But according to the learned Urdu authors, Rushdie is quite certainly an apostate. And for apostasy there is, on the authority of the Sahih Bukhari Hadis, only one punishment: death.

But Rushdie has done far worse than just leave Islam. He has insulted the Prophet. Not that any of those Imans and Mullahs and Ayatollahs can be really sure of their allegation, they haven't read the book. But, in parenthesis, even secularists puke venom over books they haven't read. Mani Shankar Aiyar totally condemns one of Arun Shourie's books, and then goes on to declare that he has decided not to read it : "*Shourie gave the final touches to the manuscript of his book on Islam, a work so vicious and perverted that every English speaking Muslim I know was outraged... I decided then to show my solidarity with secularism by not reading the book.*"¹⁹⁸ As the late Ayatollah used to say: "*It is not necessary to jump into the dungheap in order to know that it stinks.*"

Rushdie has insulted the Prophet. And the Hadis say very clearly what the Prophet's line of action (forever to be emulated by every Muslim) is in such case. There were some poets and poetesses making sarcastic songs about him and criticizing his pretense of being God's messenger. Did the Prophet bring them to a court where they were given a chance to recant (as some legalistic Muslims say is the true Islamic procedure)? No, they were just mortally stabbed in the still of the night, each of them. They were unceremoniously assassinated at the personal orders of the Prophet. Therefore, our Urdu-writing Maulanas correctly conclude that it is perfectly Islamic to kill Rushdie.¹⁹⁹

Indians may recall that such death sentences against people who have insulted the Prophet, have been carried out earlier this century: against Arya Samaj propagandists Swami Shraddhananda and Pandit Lekh Ram, and against Rajpal, the writer of the *Rangila Rasool* (more or less *Playboy Mohammed*). This was a book on the sex life of the Prophet and his wives, certainly insulting, and as a criticism of Islam rather beside the point, but understandable as a reaction against a similar vilifying Muslim pamphlet about Sita. These murders had the desired effect, for the Arya Samaj became less straightforward in its criticism of the Prophet.

Rushdie, being a mere human being, and with no belief in eternal reward for martyrs, chose at long last to do that which seemed the best way of getting back into normal life: kneeling, renouncing the *blasphemous* passages in his book, and embracing Islam. On December 24, 1990, he

came out with a statement: *"I do not agree with any statement in my novel The Satanic Verses, uttered by any of its characters, who insult the Prophet Mohammed or who cast aspersions upon Islam or upon the authenticity of the Holy Quran or who reject the divinity of Allah"*. Moreover, he promised *"to witness that there is no god but Allah and that Mohammed is his last Prophet"*, to prevent the publication of further translations, not to bring out the paperback version, and *"to continue to work for a better understanding of Islam in the world, as I have always attempted to do in the past"*.

This turn in the Rushdie affair was partly the work of Hesham El-Essawy, described as a Muslim moderate, who is chairman of the Islamic Society for the Promotion of Religious Tolerance. Well, it is a telling illustration of *religious tolerance* in Islam: arranging for someone's embracing Islam in order to save his life. A perfect illustration of the general rule that Islam has mostly collected its converts by means of threats. However, the less moderate Muslim were not satisfied even when they saw Rushdie crawling in the dust before them. An Iranian paper and some Iranian clerics declared that the Ayatollah's fatwa is irrevocable. The British Muslim leader Kalim Siddiqui called on Iran to come and kidnap Rushdie and take him to trial in an Iranian Islamic court.

In a reaction to Rushdie's conversion, the Delhi Iranian Embassy Press Attache S.H. Davisbara describes how Islam opposes slander and backing, and asks: *"How can a religion which is so strict in safeguarding the reputation of ordinary people allow a Salman Rushdie to cast aspersions against its own Prophet? And if anybody does so deliberately, as the ill-fated author did, the punishment according to Islam is nothing but death. It is for the same reason that no Islamic scholar objected when Imam Khomeini ordained that Salman Rushdie should be killed. The fatwa, as it involves an extremely sensitive issue like the personality of the exalted Prophet himself, is by its very nature irrevocable. Recently the successor of Imam Khomeini, Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei, also has reiterated that the fatwa cannot be withdrawn. It should also be pointed out that fatwa do not lapse with the passing away of the issuing authority. It is punishment for a crime already committed and a warning to other potential wrongdoers."*²⁰⁰

The Muslim Youth Movement of Britain also rejected any plea for pardoning Rushdie, unless some demands were met. Remark, the threat to kill Rushdie is not linked to his horrible guilt (and therefore irrevocable, as for Iran), nor to his apology and conversion (and therefore to be revoked), but merely to the fulfilling of demands. Promising to lift a death threat in return for concessions : this is pure terrorism. The demands were the following :

1. official recognition that Islam is the largest practicing religion in the U.K. (this is correct if Christianity is considered split into its different denominations);
2. withdrawal of all copies of the book from the bookshops; 3) a pledge from Rushdie that his book will not be produced anywhere in any manner ; 4) enactment of a law that will protect Muslim religious sensibilities from future insults and abuse.

Mohammed Siddique, the president of the Movement, declared : "*Rushdie is misguided if he believes that his 'goodwill gesture' will appease Muslims. Until Muslim demands are met, there can be no peace.*"^{[201](#)} Remark that a remark how a Muslim clearly spells out the Muslim attitude towards co-existence : "*Until Muslim demands are met, there can be no peace.*" Do you need more explanation for the communal riots in India ?

One secularist comment deserves mention. The poison is in a very little corner. G.H. Jansen, Times of India correspondent in Nicosia, writes that Rushdie's conversion "*must have been very disappointing to the literati-glitterati of New York and London who so enjoyed springing to arms in defense of Rushdie and of 'freedom'.*"^{[202](#)} What are those quote marks doing there around the word *freedom*? It seems Mr. Jansen doesn't want the right to skepticism regarding Mohammed to be described as *freedom*. The bootlickers of Islamic terrorism are treading in the footsteps of the apologists of Communism, who use to dismiss freedom (whenever someone drew attention to its non-existence in Communist countries) as *bourgeois-liberalist illusion*.

12.2 Banning criticism of Islam

Rushdie's book is by far not the only one that has been banned in the secular republic of India, on pretext of its hurting the feelings of a religious community. Let us mention first of all that, to create a semblance of impartiality, Rushdie's book was sent into exile in the company of a film that might have hurt the feelings of the Christian community : Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*, a film that attributes normal human sexual desires to Jesus. Not that any Christian had asked for this ban, but that semblance had to be created.^{[203](#)}

In recent years, several books criticizing Islam and its role in Indian history have been banned. One of them is Richard Maxwell Eaton's *Sufis of Bijapur 1300-1700 (Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India)*, published in Princeton 1978, which debunks the pious fable that the Sufis were bringers of a tolerant and refined Islam and the pioneers of a synthesis between Islam and Hinduism. Another is Arvind Ghosh's *The Koran and the Kafir* (all that an infidel needs to know about the Koran but is embarrassed to ask), published in Houston. This book chiefly groups Quranic verses topic-wise, to give a ready reference overview of Mohammed's teachings. Then there is the Australian writer Colin Maine's booklet *The Dead Hand of Islam*. It consists of little more than literal quotes from Islamic Scripture. Nonetheless, to appease Muslim pressure, the publisher is being prosecuted, and the book has been banned. Incidentally, there was absolutely no trouble concerning his similar book on Christianity, *The Bible : What It Says*.

Banning a book for containing Quranic verses...Is this a first step towards banning the Quran ? And that, moreover, at the Muslims' own instigation ? Let's face it : the objectionable lines in Colin Maine's book, for which it was banned, also appear in the Quran and the surrounding Islamic canon. Why should Mohammed's big book be *more equal* than Mr. Maine's booklet ?

A head-on call to judge the Quran by the same standards as other books, was the essence of Chandmal Chopra's famous Quran petition. Mr. Chopra had filed a writ petition in the Calcutta High Court in March 1985, seeking a ban on a book which incites to hatred and struggle against a group of people on the basis of religion. His petition lists several dozens of quotes from the objectionable book, unambiguously pouring contempt on, and inciting war against, a group of religious communities : the non-Muslims. It

also quotes the book as pouring contempt on religious figures sacred to other communities, notably Jesus and Mary. The book is, of course, the Quran.

The petition was dismissed by justice B.C. Basak in May 1985. A central point in the verdict was, that Courts cannot interfere with religious beliefs like the sacred and divine character of the Quran (in marked contrast to the secularist line on Ram Janmabhoomi, where Hindus are asked to allow Courts to overrule their religious beliefs). In 1986, a book was published containing the court documents, with a scholarly introduction by Sita Ram Goel.²⁰⁴ The introduction says that of course no ban on the Quran was ever intended (since Scriptures and Classics are kept out of the purview of censorship legislation, there was no chance of obtaining such a ban), but that attention had to be drawn on the fact that, while some allegedly provocative books are being banned, a book is widely circulated and studied intensively in thousands of state-subsidized institutions, which makes far more explicit calls to communal strife than any banned book so far has done. The solution is not to ban the Quran, but on the contrary to honestly read it and judge it for yourself in the light of reason.

For this book, the Calcutta police arrested Mr. Chandmal Chopra on August 31, 1987, accusing him of entering into a *criminal conspiracy* with Mr. Sita Ram Goel for publishing the book with the *deliberate* intention of *provoking communal strife* in Calcutta and West Bengal. His bail application was opposed *vehemently* by the public prosecutor. He was kept in police custody till September 8, so that the *conspiracy* could be "*investigated without his coming in the way*". Mr. Goel, "*a co-accused still at large*", applied for anticipatory bail. This was first postponed and then rejected. Mr. Goel had to abscond for a while to avoid being dragged to the Calcutta jail.

While the verdict on the Quran petition had overstepped secular limits by declaring the Quran a *revealed* scripture (which is a claim beyond secular proof), and by taking great pains to prove that Islam is a religion of peace, now the police charge-sheet distorted the facts by calling the book's academic language *malicious* and *provocative*. At any rate, Mr. Chopra and

Mr. Goel got caught in a long-drawn-out legal battle, though the book itself was not banned.

Perhaps the most revealing story of a book banning concerns Ram Swarup's *Understanding Islam through Hadis*. This is an annotated topic-wise summary of the Sahih Muslim, one of the two most authoritative traditions concerning the words and deeds of the Prophet. The book was first published in the U.S., a secular and multi-religious country. In India also, the English original circulated for some time without inviting any governmental attention. But when the Hindi translation was nearing publication, something went wrong.

The book was at the binders' workshop, which was situated in a predominantly Muslim neighbourhood. A neighbour must have spread the word that a book scrutinizing the Prophet was about to be offered for sale in the bookstores. The one chance for preventing the book from reaching any readers, was now. Suddenly, a crowd of people gathered around the binders' shop. They demanded the entire stock of the objectionable book to be handed over for burning, otherwise they would set the place itself on fire.

The police was called. They made no attempt to disperse the crowd. Instead they summoned and arrested the printer and the publisher, and they made sure that everyone got an eyeful of the arrest show. They also confiscated the stock of the contentious book. Having thus placated the crowd, they released the printer and the publisher after 18 hours, but the copies of the book were not returned. They have not been heard of since, even though the book was not officially banned.

In deference to a plaint by the Muslim neighbour, the Delhi administration has had two meetings in 1988-89, to consider whether the book was objectionable. Twice it was cleared. But the pressure for banning it was kept up.

The Jama'at-i Islami paper *Radiance*, on the front page of its June 17, 1990 issue, carried a big caption : "*Is this book not objectionable ?*" Presenting some excerpts from Ram Swarup's book, it warned its readers : "*Most parts of the book are concoctions and distortions as well as*

defamatory and derogatory to the Holy Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him)". What concoctions and distortions ?

The same front page quotes four of these objectionable distortions. Among them : "*Mohammed saw Zaynab in half- naked condition and he fell in love with her.*"²⁰⁵ Well, maybe this is objectionable. But it is not Ram Swarup's concoction or distortion. The source is the Sahih Muslim, one of the two most authoritative Hadis collections. Ram Swarup has here and there added some sober and factual comment, but at no point does he come in the way of the Hadis text speaking for itself. If the Jama'at-i Islami wants to ban such information from being circulated in India, it should seek a ban on the Hadis as well as the Quran. If the Quran and the Hadis are allowed to be read and sold, we should all have the right to read them, shouldn't we ? And since there is no copyright problem, we can even publish scholarly selections from them. The Jama'at-i Islami has, in all the years that the book has been available in bookstores, not sought a ban on Vinoba Bhave's *The Essence of the Quran*, a syrupy selection of all the nice and harmless verses from the Quran.

But no, the Jama'at as well as other Muslim groups, and personalities close to the Janata Dal (either faction), have sought a ban on Ram Swarup's book. In September 1990, a court ruled that the book was unobjectionable. But the pressure continued. And come December 1990, a third meeting of Delhi administration officials revoked the two earlier decisions, and issued a ban on the book. It forfeited all the copies published or to be published in the future, on the ground that the book *deliberately and maliciously* outrage "*the religious feelings of the Muslims by insulting their religion and their religious beliefs*". For the semblance of even-handedness, it also banned a non-descript book on Ramayana and Mahabharata, and took care to put the latter ban first in its official notification. No one is fooled, though.

Arun Shourie has commented : "*The forfeiture is exactly the sort of thing which has landed us where we are : where intellectual inquiry is shut out ; where our tradition are not examined and reassessed ; and where as a consequence there is no dialogue.*"²⁰⁶

An interesting fact about the Muslim reaction against Ram Swarup's book, is that Muslim leaders like the Radiance editor expect to get away with the lie that the embarrassing but faithful quotations from Scripture are really *concoctions and distortions*. It seems that the common Muslims do not know the Quran and Hadis from A to Z. Many of them readily believe their leaders' contention that Mohammed was above the behaviour ascribed to him by the Hadis and the orthodox biographies. Their reverence is directed towards a mythical Mohammed, who is different in character from the historical Mohammed as he appears through the Islamic Scriptures. And this mythical Mohammed of popular Muslim belief is slandered when the Scriptural testimonies about the historical Mohammed are quoted.

The same discrepancy between the orthodox historical Mohammed, and the mythical Mohammed of popular belief was at the core of an earlier book-banning episode, dating back to the fifties. Muslims had staged a riot against the book Muhammad, by Thomas and Thomas, published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay. The Nehru government rewarded them for their agitation by banning the book.²⁰⁷ According to the rioters, or their leaders, the book had defamed the Prophet.

The book narrated how Mohammed had become frightened when the angel Gabriel came with the first revelation from Allah. He wanted to know whether he had been visited by an angel or a devil. He told Khadija what had happened, and she asked him to tell her as soon as Gabriel would visit him next. He did so. Khadija bared her right and her left thigh turn by turn, and asked Mohammed to sit on each and see if the visitor stayed. Next Khadija bared her bosom and asked Mohammed to sit in her lap. Finally, she asked him to have sexual intercourse with her. Now the visitor disappeared. Khadija congratulated Mohammed that his visitor was an angel and not a devil.

This story was by no means *concoction and distortion*. One can read it in the orthodox biographies of Mohammed. Ibn Ishaq, his first biographer, relates :

Ismail b. Ibn Hakim, a freedman of the family of al- Zubayr, told me on Khadija's authority that she said to the apostle of God : *O son of my uncle, are you able to tell me about your visitant, when he comes to you?* He

replied that he could, and she asked him to tell her when he came. So when Gabriel came to him, as he was wont, the apostle said to Khadija : "*This is Gabriel who has just come to me*". *Get up, O son of my uncle*, she said, *and sit by my left thigh*. The apostle did so, and she said : "*Then turn around and sit on my right thigh*". He did so, and she said : '*Can you see him ?*' And he replied :*No*. She said : '*O son of my uncle, rejoice, and be of good heart, by God he is an angel and not a satan.*'

"I told Abdullah b. Hasan this story and he said : 'I heard my mother Fatima, daughter of Husayn, talking about this tradition from Khadija, but as I heard it, she made the apostle of God come inside her shift, and thereupon Gabriel departed, and she said tot he apostle of God : 'This is verily an angel and not a satan.'"

These two paragraphs can be read by anyone on p.107 of The Life of Muhammad, published by the prestigious Oxford University Press, Karachi (first time in 1955, reprinted seven times till 1987). The book is an English translation by A. Guillaume of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah (Biography of Allah's Prophet). The authors of the banned book had not distorted or concocted anything. Moreover, they bore no malice towards Mohammed. On the contrary, they were endorsing, after the orthodox Muslim fashion, that this episode proved the divine source of Mohammed's revelations.

The average Muslim does not know what is written in the Islamic Scriptures. He shares the normal moral notions of his Hindu neighbours, and assumes that the Holy Prophet must have excelled in those virtues which he himself values. The Muslim politicians and theologians exploit his ignorance and mobilize him for street riots by ascribing to *enemies of Islam* what is in fact contained in their own Scriptures. And all this is being condoned by the secularists, who turn a blind eye to this deception and misguidance of the common Muslim, and to the attacks of Muslim politicians and theologians against out freedom of inquiry.

12.3 Secularism and book-banning

When Ram Swarup's book on the Hadis was banned under pressure from Muslim fanatics, there was of course not a word of protest from the secularists. If in secular Europe, the pope speaks out against the Scorsese film on Jesus' temptations, without even trying to pressure governments to ban it, the European secularist press, as if to pre-empt any suggestion of a ban, makes it quite clear that there can be no question of anyhow restricting the public's access to the film.²⁰⁸ If people don't want to see it, let them not go see it. That is their freedom, like it is other people's freedom to go see it, unimpeded by papal or governmental bans.

While secularism is a European import into India, I just don't recognize the *secularism* practiced in India. It so happens that I have grown up in one of the first countries ever to adopt a fully secular Constitution, Belgium. In my country, we think that secularism implies the freedom to learn, teach and practice a religion, and also the freedom to reject, abandon and criticize a religion. But in India, those who call themselves *secular*, combine a Stalinist propensity to ban religious education in (non-minority) schools, or to ban *religious* TV serials, with a bigoted propensity to ban books that take a critical look at religions. In both cases, they arrogate the right to decide for others what they can see and read, and what not.

We think that secularism means : let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred ideas compete. But in India, the favourite slogan of secularists is : *Ban it !* Listen here, friends : banning for secularism is like f...ing for virginity.

We think we have a right to know about every aspect of life, including religion ; whether we want to practice it or to reject it, we have a right to full access to information. But in India, secularists are not satisfied with the freedom for themselves to know and find out : they support demands for the *freedom* to limit others' freedom of access to books and films. And their justification is that these books and films might *hurt feelings* and thus *disturb communal harmony*. Indian secularists declare that a critical or *blasphemous* book should be banned, because it may offend someone's feelings. Genuine secularists oppose bans because a ban offends our intelligence. And offended it is, by these inflated book-banners who claim the right to decide for us what we can read and what not.

In Europe, we have come to protect our constitutional freedoms, and hardly any bigot will even think of either seriously campaigning for a ban or using violence to punish people who show interest in the material to which he objects. All right, there was a bomb attack on a movie theater showing the Temptation film. But the culprit was simply caught and put in jail. Nobody has suggested that we should ban the film in order to avert violence. If at all there is a threat of violence, then there are no two opinions about the duty of the state to uphold the constitutional freedoms, and to prevent terror-mongers from dictating who can see what.²⁰⁹

In India, by contrast, the secularists are systematically on the side of the terror-mongers. They were the first to support the latter's demand for banning The Satanic Verses. Terror-threatening bigots said :*Ban this book, or else...* And secularists echoed : "*We must ban this book, or else...*"

But Indian secularists not only side with armed bigots ; there is also the Stalinist streak in them (incidentally, Stalin was an ex-seminarian). They not only want to ban what is objectionable and *hurting* to followers of some religions : they also want to ban what is sacred or at least valuable and uplifting to members of another religion.

A great many secularists have blamed the Ramayana and Mahabharata TV serials for the "*rise of Hindu communalism*" and for the *Ram hysteria*.²¹⁰ Of course, Ram was never that far away from the ordinary Hindu's consciousness, that the TV serials could have made much of a difference. Through Tulsidas' Hindi Ramayana, the common people in North India are thoroughly familiar with Ram, Sita and Hanuman, and they don't need TV serials to remind them. For the urban elites, it may have been a reminder of the culture they are in danger of forgetting. But for those secularists who have been completely alienated from their culture, these TV serials were anathema, and so, of course, they wanted them to be banned.

Not that a ban would have been in the interest of peace and communal harmony. While most Hindus had no need of this TV serial in order to keep up their devotion for Ram, once it was there they avidly watched it. And they would have been very angry if its showing had been suspended. It might have led to some outbursts, who knows. At any rate, if you ban books

in order to pre-empt Muslim riots, you should take the possibility of Hindus starting riots also into account (or do our secularists subscribe to the received wisdom that Hindus are less riot-prone?). But that consideration for Hindus taking to the streets was not too prominent in the pleas for a ban on the TV serials. And they could have argued, of course, that such a Hindu reaction would have been the lesser evil, as the showing of the serials has been instrumental in the Ram Mandir campaign, which has encountered (*triggered*) enough violence. But I think it is time the secularists come out and admit that a ban on *Hindu* TV serials is dear to them not because of the law and order situation, but because of the fact that these serials remind Hindus of Hindu culture.

The basic objection of the secularists against the Ramayana and Mahabharata, both in their written and in their film versions, is that they are *religious Scriptures* of one community, and therefore their reading or showing should be limited to places and channels of Hindus only ; no state-owned TV station should be open for such *communal* stories.

Having attended some press conferences in Delhi, and having talked to some press people here, as well as to other classes of intellectuals, I am amazed to see the crudeness in these secularists' understanding of religious and cultural matters. Most of them are nice and well-meaning people, but they are completely illiterate. They just don't have the education, or the power of discrimination, to distinguish between cultural epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana, and *religious Scriptures*.

If at all you want a point of comparison in other cultures, perhaps Homer's epics Ilias and Odyssea might do : that was a common heritage of the Greek people, but not a revealed Scripture containing dogmas. Or, for a more provocative but quite accurate comparison, a good equivalent of the role of the Ramayana in Hindu culture is the role of the same Ramayana in Indonesian culture. The question has been put to the secularists several times, but they have not come up with any trace of an answer : if Indonesian Muslims can venerate Ram, why can't Indian Muslims, as well as Indian secularists, do the same ? The well-informed Indonesians don't object to Ram as a *communal* character, as a *god* of one religion and therefore anathema to others.

Another non-Hindu tribe that has given a warm reception to the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics, are the European film and theater audiences. Between 1985 and 1990, these epics have found their way to the public in Europe. They have been top of the bill at the Avignon theater festival. Peter Brooke's Mahabharata, though perhaps not sufficiently true to the original for Indian purists, has been applauded by the viewers, and has been shown on many TV stations also. The BBC has even broadcast the Hindi TV serials. While the comments on certain artistic aspects of these realisations may vary, the reviewers were unanimously impressed by the contents of these epics.

The secularists in India like to portray themselves as the bringers of civilisation from the West to obscurantist India. Well, let them not fool anybody. In Europe, not one single critic has come up with the idea that these epics could somehow be *communal*. On the contrary, they have all stressed that these stories are about universal human values. Of course, with that quite proper assessment of these epics, any kind of a call for a ban on these film versions of the epics was totally unthinkable.

Incidentally, it is time for me to reply to those indignant readers who might ask : who is this foreigner to comment on our affairs ? Well, since secularism was imported into India from Europe, and is now held up as India's only salvation by an Indian-born colonial elite, I do think I am competent to comment on what these West- oriented civilizers are making of our precious heritage of secularism. They are making a mess of it.

As I have pointed out in [chapter 10.4](#), there can be no correct understanding of *secularism* without a correct understanding of *religion*. If people are so illiterate as to treat the Ramayana as a *religious Scripture* (by which they imply dogma, authoritarian claims of infallibility, non-humanism) then their understanding of both religion and secularism cannot but be defective. It is this conceptual confusion that keeps their conscience undisturbed when they shield fanatics in the name of tolerance and defend book-banning in the name of secularism.

12.4. Banning religion from school

Apart from the subtle point that the Indian secularists lack the conceptual subtlety to do justice to either religion or secularism, there is a far more crude way in which they mess up the precious doctrine of secularism. It is this : they themselves are communalists. The secularists do not hesitate to support policies of discrimination on the basis of religion.

One of these is the discrimination against Hinduism in the matter of educational institutions. This is ban of far greater weight than all the bans on books, films and Verses together.

According to Bipan Chandra's classical definition, communalism is the belief that people who share the same religion, thereby also have common secular interests.²¹¹ An active communalism not only postulates that people who share a religion, have common secular interests ; it also grants them (or withholds from them) secular rights on the basis of their belonging to a given religion. Therefore, it is certainly a case of active communalism when we find the secular Constitution of India (which limits its own authority to secular matters), in its Article 30, guaranteeing the secular right to set up educational institutions of their choice exclusively to minorities, including religious minorities. This case of discrimination against the *majority community* is outright communalism.²¹² Yet, no secularist raises his voice against it. On the contrary, when pressed for an opinion, they support it.

When Sadhvi Ritambhara, a pro-Janmabhoomi campaigner (a cassette of a speech of hers was banned), tells an interviewer: "*Politicians appease [the Muslims] at every step, while the Hindus are taken for granted. We can't even teach our children our religion in schools*", the interviewer replies : "*But this is a secular nation*".²¹³

No, in these circumstances it is not a secular nation. Either secular means *anti-religious*, and then all religion teaching should be banned from schools, also that of the minorities.²¹⁴ Or secular means *religiously neutral*, and then the state should leave all the religions the same right to impart religious education in schools, including the Hindus. Passing off this communal discrimination as *secular*, is a very crude lie indeed.

In Belgium, the secular Constitution gives any religious (or other²¹⁵) community the right to found its own schools, which will be recognized and subsidized if they satisfy certain legal norms. They can impart religious education within the regular class hours. In state schools, the curriculum comprises two hours per week of religious or moral education, with a choice between non- religious morality, or Catholic, Protestant, Jewish or Islamic religion. The secular philosophy behind this, is that it is not the duty of the state to either promote or eradicate religion. The state should be neutral and limit itself to regulating the genuine demand from the public for a reasonable dosis of the religious education of its own choice. A religiously neutral state : that is secularism.

But in India, the secularists intend to put up an all-out fight the day Hindus take steps to abolish this constitutional discrimination against them. In my opinion, if the Hindus want to fruitfully use the energy which the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign has generated, they should direct it first of all to restoring justice in the field of education.

Both the Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission have been fighting legal battles for recognition as non-Hindu sects, in order to safeguard their educational institutions. Their lawyers have thought up very specious doctrinal difference between the organization they represented, and Hinduism. Thus, the Ramakrishna Mission has been arguing that they have *another God* than the Hindus. Their great saint Ramakrishna was always perfectly satisfied with Kali, like millions of Hindus. Their founder, Swami Vivekananda, was the representative of Hinduism in the world parliament of religions in Chicago 1893. "*Say with pride : we are Hindus*", that is what Vivekananda said. Forsaking its roots, the Ramakrishna Mission goes begging in Court for a non-Hindu status.²¹⁶

It may well be that both the Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission have been afflicted with the general shame of and depreciation for everything Hindu. Behind their Court plea for a non-Hindu status may well be a theological shift away from Hinduism (although they would have to make it a very big shift, because very diverse sects exist within the Hindu fold).

Nevertheless, their official apology to their Hindu supporters is that minority status is the only way to escape government take-overs of their schools. Especially the CPM government in West Bengal has been ruthlessly using the constitutional discrimination against Hindu schools for justifying take-overs. But have these organizations appealed to Hindu society to come to their rescue? Have they launched, or asked politicians to launch, a campaign to end this discrimination ? Apparently they have absolutely no confidence in the willingness of Hindu politicians to take up even an impeccably justified Hindu cause.

So, I think Hindu politicians should make this their number one issue. Article 30 is far more unjust and harmful than Article 370 which gives a special status to Kashmir. You can better lose that piece of territory than to lose your next generations. It is also a good exercise in separating the genuine secularists from the Hindu-baiters. The demand for equality between all religions in education merely seeks the abrogation of an injustice against the Hindus, so it cannot be construed as *directed against the minorities*. It wants to stop a blatant case of discrimination on the basis of religion, so everyone who comes out in support of the present form of Article 30, will stand exposed as a supporter of communal discrimination. It is truly a watershed issue.

Chapter 13. Facing the Truth the Only Solution

13.1 Facing the Past

The chronic disease of communal riots is not going to end by all the talk of secularism and national integration. Some people in Indian politics and in the press seem to think that by repeating the mantra *secularism* often enough, you will get secularism. But by saying *food, food, food* your hunger will not be satisfied. Rather, you will starve to death, or get bored to death by this insupportable repetitiveness.

Superficial Sadbhavana bla-bla is not capable of stopping communal hatred. A minimum requirement for communal harmony is that

1. the historical and ideological roots of communal hatred are faced squarely, and
2. the general and theoretical insight into the roots of the problem are actualized by a formal acceptance of historical responsibilities.

After 1945, the Germans have apologized to the Jews for what they had done to them. They also have paid huge reparations to the Polish, Russian and Jewish peoples, for them it was more than just a gesture ; but it is the gesture which we want to consider here. The Japanese needed till 1989 before they apologized to the Koreans. The fact that the Japanese occupation of Korea had ended since 44 years was not invoked as an excuse for just disregarding that unfortunate chapter in history. Also in 1989, the Soviet authorities have recognized their guilt in the Katyn massacre of Polish officers, and held a ceremony on the site with Polish leaders. In 1990, the Soviets have apologized to the Koreans for starting the Korean war in 1950, as well as for shooting down the Korean airliner in 1983.^{[217](#)} In 1990, the American government has apologized to the Japanese who had pre- emptively been arrested and put in concentration camps during World

War II, and payed a compensation in cash to the affected people still alive. On December 29, 1990, the Centenary of the Native Americans' last battle in Wounded Knee was marked with a ceremony in which the South Dakota governor offered words of sorrow and apology. It was the culmination of a *Year of Reconciliation*.²¹⁸ And the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa publicly apologized to the blacks, and asked them for forgiveness, for the ideological support it had given to Apartheid. The way to make a new beginning goes via recognizing and formally terminating the faults of the past.

The application of this principle to the Indian situation is crystal-clear; the Muslim community should come out and recognize the atrocities which its earlier generations have inflicted on the Hindus, and make a gesture of goodwill to formally terminate that chapter in history.

Leaving the Ram Janmabhoomi spot to the Hindus, to do with it as they please, would have been just such a gesture. A very easy one, for it cost nothing. The Muslim community was not even in control of the place, all they would have to do was not to interfere in what already was an internal Hindu affair. The fact that even this easy goodwill gesture was not made, at least by the externally recognized leadership of the Muslim community, is a very sad thing. On a world-wide scale, the time is ripe for such a recognition of past mistakes.

The Christians are facing their past. Even in religion class in Catholic schools in Belgium, we gave attention to the gruesome part in Church history. In Latin America, the 500th anniversary of Columbus' arrival has sparked some serious reconsideration both within and outside the Church, about the role of Christianity in the wholesale destruction of all the cultures without exception in the entire *New World*. In Delhi, I have asked a Roman Catholic Father, head of an important institute, what he had to say about the acts of fanaticism perpetrated by many of his predecessors in the Mission. He said: "*We are not uptight about it.*"

While this past is by no means forgotten, the Christians have, by and large, accepted that in the name of Christianity very large-scale crimes against humanity have been committed. They now reorient themselves, making a distinction between the original spirit of Christianity, and the later

aberrations. It is possible to live with the realization that the community to which one belongs, is or has been responsible for less than uplifting practices (Dante, the greatest of Christian poets, described how utterly depraved the Church had become in his time, and then added that to him it still remained the Church of Christ).

So, it is time to face the truth. Judging by the glasnost in the Soviet block and in the Catholic Church regarding past crimes, the time is ripe to finish the glossing-over which the secularists have been practicing and propagating. The rosy presentation of Islam which the secularist press is feeding the public, should be debunked.

In Europe there are also people, very few, who insist on denying the Nazi crimes, the genocide on the Jews and the Gypsies.^{[219](#)} These people are called revisionists or negationists, and their stand is considered highly objectionable (France has even gone a little too far, in my opinion, by making it a punishable offence to deny the Nazi extermination camps). In India, by contrast, the negationists who deny the existence of the centuries-long jihad, in which a systematic oppression and slaughter of Kafirs was pursued, are calling the shots.

Even if the Muslims themselves don't feel ready yet for coming to terms with their communal past (which may be humanly difficult, and should in no way be forced on them), that is no reason for secular intellectuals to stick to this negationist glossing-over.

In 1987 the Japanese ministry of education decided to tone down the report of the *Rape of Nanching* (a massacre in China by the Japanese occupation forces in World War II) in Japanese history books. They wanted to put in a new version : this massacre was nothing special, it just happens in any war, it had nothing to do with Japanese national supremacism, and therefore it doesn't deserve any special highlighting. They did not intend much more than changing the proportions of this episode vis-a-vis the totality of the war. They were not going to deny that it had happened. Yet, China reacted angrily. The Chinese government filed a strong official protest against this rewriting of history, and Chinese communities in different countries held demonstrations in front of the Japanese embassies.

So, that is how particular the Chinese are about setting the historical record straight.^{[220](#)} Now, even if Japan ever whitewashes its entire role in World War II (which it does not consider doing at all), even if Chinese protests could not prevent such a development, then that still would not make any neutral historian, much less the Chinese themselves, rewrite their own history-books to absolve the erstwhile Japanese aggressors. But in India, we find the unbelievable situation, that not only Muslim historians and public figures refuse to face the truth about Muslim history : neutral *secular* historians are also covering up and denying the crimes which Islam has systematically committed, and even many Hindus are denying the crimes committed against their own society.

It is a matter of self-respect as much as a matter of respect for the historical truth, that Hindus face their own history and tell their children about the crimes of the closed creeds like Islam.

13.2. Islam and Nazism

It may sound shocking to some people that I have compared the Hindu-Muslim relations with the Jewish-German relations of the Nazi period. While in Israel you get to hear more comparisons of Muslims with Nazis, in India it may still be unfashionable. I would like to point out that comparing people to the Nazis is not so uncommon. In fact, the communists call non-communists fascists all the time. In the communalism debate, the Hindu side has been bracketed with Nazism by all sorts of people, even by a smug bourgeois like Mani Shankar Aiyar (in several episodes of his Sunday column, where he considerably distorts German history to make it fit, see [ch.14.10](#)) or a preacherous do-gooder like Rajmohan Gandhi, as much as by rank fanatics like Syed Shahabuddin.

Now, I don't have to distort history in order to make my comparison of Islam with Nazism. In very essential characteristics, the role of Islam in Indian history is the same as the role of Nazism in German-Jewish history.

Firstly, both uphold an absolute division of humanity in a superior and glory-bound community, and an evil and hell-bound community. The Quran

says dozens of times that the Kafirs are condemned in an absolute and eternal sense, whereas the Momins or believers are promised eternal lust in heaven. Nazism didn't have those otherworldly pretensions, but in this world the Jew was identified with everything evil, and made to suffer for it. This is just like Islam, which from its absolute and eternal division of humanity logically deduced their radically different status in the other world, and imposed a radically inferior status on the Kafirs in worldly matters also.

Secondly, on the conscience-quietening bedrock of this divisionist ideology, they both set up a program for the total extermination of the inferior species. Here there was one difference : since Nazism postulated biological determination, and erroneously thought Judaism as a racial unit, there was no way out for anyone born from Jewish parents. Facing the sword of Islam, Kafirs had one escape : conversion. If they had been taken captive when fighting or fleeing the Muslim armies, even conversion could not save them from slavery, but at least it saved their lives in most cases.

I estimate that the Muslim conquerors killed more than six million Hindus, the number of Jews killed by the Nazis.^{[221](#)} Of course, they had a bigger number of victims to pick from, and they had centuries while the Nazis had a few years. But then, they didn't have the technology, nor the total control of the country. They didn't have the means to be as thorough. Among the systematic killers, like Ghaznavi, Ghoris, Teimur, Babar, there was a clear drive to physically finish the Kafirs. Fortunately they didn't have gas chambers, but they had no inhibition in using all the killing apparatus at their disposal. The Bahmani sultans made it a point to kill one lakh Hindus every year.

On top of outright massacres, there were several other ways in which the Muslim conquerors and rulers caused the death of many lakhs of Hindus. Many died a nameless death under the hardships of slavery. Many were made to fight in special infantry cohorts in the Muslim armies, and systematically used for the risky and suicidal tasks.^{[222](#)}

This absolute disrespect for the lives of the Kafirs was founded in Islamic doctrine. It was not an isolated incident, but part of a pattern that was also

in evidence in other parts of the Muslim empire. The Egyptian-born scholar Mrs. Bat Ye'or has presented a collection of documents about the Jewish and Christian communities living under Muslim rule, and of whom Muslim apologetics always boasts that they were treated better than minorities in Christian countries.²²³ In reality, they were often subjected to all kinds of harassment and humiliation, large-scale abduction of women and children, and occasional mass slaughter. As late as 1915, the Turks slaughtered about 15 lakh Christian Armenians, more than one-fourth of the Armenian population, or a percentage close to that of the Jews killed by the Nazis. They never expressed regret or paid reparations. Hitler, when criticized by his aides about the extermination camps, explicitly invoked the Armenian genocide as a precedent.

There are also smaller points of similarity. Before the extermination of the Jews began, the Jews were tolerated but they had to suffer a number of restrictions and humiliations, which correspond closely to the restrictions imposed on the Zimmis by the Muslims. A telling example is that they had to make themselves physically recognizable by wearing a David's star on the chest, just like the Muslims imposed the wearing of specific dress on the Jews in Morocco, the Christians in Egypt, the Hindus in Gujarat.

Like the Muslims, the Nazis acknowledged an intermediate status between the Jews/Kafirs who have to be exterminated, and the Herrenvolk/Muslims who should rule the world. The Nazis did not want to exterminate *inferior* races like the Slavs, but they wanted them to remain as third-class citizens, with no say in power, wholly subordinate to the *superior* race. And the Muslims did not declare total war on the *People of the Book* (Jews and Christians), who could remain as third-class citizens, with no say in power, wholly subordinate to the Muslims.

This is the heritage which the Muslim community has to face. It can be done. In fact it is only hard to the extent that you keep identifying yourself with those rulers who conducted such policies, and with the doctrines that inspired them. It can be taken as a glorious opportunity, to free one's community from those awful heroes and doctrines.

13.3. Seeing the bright side

While some secularists are outright liars and conscious history-distorters, this falsified history has become so widespread that there is now a generation of *intellectuals* who genuinely believe that Aurangzeb was *the unifier of India*, rather than a cruel fanatic, or that Mahmud Ghaznavi plundered for wealth rather than to terrorize the Kafirs. In the case of non-historians, I will give the benefit of the doubt and assume that their whitewashing of Muslim history is in good faith.

For instance, Mani Shankar Aiyar has said : "*All [Uma Bharati] sees, knows or cares to know are Mahmud Ghaznavi, Aurangzeb and others. It is not germane to her world view that Islam brought brotherhood to the world and initiated the greatest self-improvement movement, a part of which were Sant Tukaram, Namdev, Mirabai, Guru Nanak and Kabir.*"^{[224](#)}

As for this *brotherhood*, the facts are that Islam practiced slavery on an unprecedented scale, and that its treatment of Kafirs was anything but brotherly (unless you think Aurangzeb's treatment of his broad-minded brother Dara Shikoh is normative). If the saints mentioned by Mani were that great, then the credit goes to Hindu culture, of which each of them was a part. Even Kabir, the only one among them with an unmistakable Islamic connection (an Arabic name), has never said that "*there is no contact with the divine except through the Quran*", which is essential in Islam ; he has said on the contrary that liberation is not to be found in Scripture (a stand always held up against Brahmins, but in fact more shattering for Islam with its total belief in one definitive Scripture). I have it on good authority that Kabir's thought is Hindu through and through.^{[225](#)} The simplest proof that his contribution to Indian culture was un-Islamic, is that he was persecuted for his Kafir ideas by the Muslim ruler Sikandar Lodi.

One well-known Indian journalist told me that "*this Ram Janmabhoomi movement is finishing the tolerance which was brought into Hinduism by the Sufis like Kabir and Nanak*". My God, what a distortion. First, the statements of tolerance in Hinduism can be found in pre-Sufi books like the Rig-Veda and the Bhagavad Gita : "*Let good thoughts come to us from all sides*", or "*The truth is one but the wise call it by many names*", or Krishna

saying that "*Whoever invokes a deity by whatever name, it is Me he invokes*". Second, it is a myth that the Bhakti movement owes a lot to the Sufi movement.

If anything, it was the reverse. But by that, I do not mean, as secularists would hope, that Sufis took over a lot from these Bhakti saints : they didn't, in fact they scrupulously avoided Kafir influences. But Bhakti was a late-medieval re-statement of doctrines that had always been present in Hindu tradition. And its universalism and stress on direct experience had been expressed in the teachings of many sects, some of which had a following outside Hindusthan proper. It was there that they left traces which have reappeared in Muslim religious thought as Sufism.

When Islam had overrun Iran and Turkestan, the local religions were exterminated, but they started a second life as the Sufi movement, which brought distinctly un-Islamic elements back into the official culture, but in Islamic garb. The original Sufis, like Jalal ud-Din Rumi, brought a lot of the open-mindedness and universalism of pre-Islamic culture back into the Islamized world. However, the later Sufis who came to India, were largely just missionaries, who may have practiced mysticism which was un-Islamic enough, and yet joined in the fanatical drive to exterminate Paganism, by conversion or otherwise. (For some authentic testimony, I could advise you to read Eaton's book *Sufis of Bijapur*, but with the secularists active or passive support, it has been banned).

It should be stressed that what is worthwhile in Sufism, is the un-Islamic part. The consciousness exploration, the universalism, the commonality (or should I say: the *communalism*) with all creature, this is very nice but very un-Islamic, nowhere to be found in the Quran or the Hadis. The orthodox doctors of Islam knew it well enough that this was heresy.²²⁶ But increasingly, Sufism was integrated into Islam, not to make it more humane, but to become less humane itself. And when Sufism reached India, it was not the stuff that could attract genuine saints like Guru Nanak or Tulsidas (who, perhaps because of his devotion to Ram, is absent from Mani Shankar Aiyar's list), or Kabir. It was these Hindus who gave some attention to the fact that Muslims too had devotion and a universal spiritual

urge, and even in the face of Islam's fanatic challenge, these Hindu saints held high the banner of universalism.

If I try to understand where these people get the wholly erroneous notion that it is Sufism that brought tolerance into Hinduism, I surmise they might be meaning the *attacks* on the social *intolerance* of the caste system, which are attributed to these Bhakti saints (mis- termed Sufis). Well, that has to be looked into. To my knowledge, Kabir has only said that social differences disappear during the Bhakti experience. And the same thing counts for Guru Nanak, and, for that matter, for Gautama Buddha. They were not social reformers.²²⁷ At most, they had to make certain social choices in the practical organization of their sect.

It is the deep influence of Marxism, together with a total ignorance concerning religion, that makes it hard for people to see these religious teachers for what they were : teachers of a spiritual path. In Ambedkar I see no religious enthusiasm for the Buddha's teachings. All he does with the teaching of Compassion, is using it as a stick to beat Brahminism with: a complete subordination of the Buddha's spiritual message to Ambedkar's own political compulsions.²²⁸ Another example of this essentially Marxist exaggeration of social concerns is the *Sanskritization* theory (which holds that lower castes adopted Brahmin ways to raise their status), where it says that some castes adopted vegetarianism for prestige reasons, off-hand denying the possibility that spiritual teachers convinced people of the intrinsic spiritual, ethical or health value of vegetarianism.

So, While here I don't want to give my final opinion on the matter, it seems to me that the Bhakti saints were religious teachers rather than social reformers. I think the compulsion to see social reformers everywhere in Indian history, follows from a Marxist prejudice, from an ignorance of religion as a field of experience in its own right, and from a far too grim image of the structure and living conditions in traditional Hindu society.

The journalist I just quoted, also praised these *Sufis* for being *iconoclasts*. Again, what he meant was probably that they went against obsolete or harmful practices, both at the social and the religious level. Well, very good of them. But what does it say about my secularist spokesman, that he

praises people for being *iconoclasts*? This : he is totally alienated from pluralist Hindu culture, and has imbibed the monotheist contempt for *idols* to this extent that he uses *idol-breaker* as a synonym for *free-thinker*. What he doesn't realize, is that an *idol-breaker* is by definition intolerant. Breaking something that is sacred to someone, is not a proof of free-thinking and open-mindedness at all. Breaking your own false gods of self-righteousness and sweet illusions, and giving up your own claims to dictate to others what to believe and what not, that is more convincing proof of a free and positive mind.[229](#)

13.4. Tolerance in Islam

In spite of all the untruth in pro-Islamic myths that have recently been floated, it is all right that people try to see the bright side of Islam, be it in *brotherhood* or in Sufism. However, they should make sure it is the real Islam they are talking about, not some syrupy misrepresentation by latter-day apologists or by self-deceiving Hindus like Vinoba Bhave (whose *Essence of the Quran* is nothing but a suppressio veri, and thus a suggestio falsi : it nicely keeps out of the reader's view all the most repulsive verses). Nobody has any quarrel with the private version of Islam that some people entertain, but general statements about the "*tolerance (or otherwise) of Islam*", should be checked against the real, official Islam. And even in presentations of Islam as tolerant, we may be facing not the heartfelt belief of an open-minded Muslim, but a shameless attempt at deception.

For instance, I have heard Hindutva people sing the praise of Maulana Azad, for being a model of a tolerant Muslim. And they quoted him as saying that Hindu-Muslim unity was for him more important than independence, and that this was in keeping with the example of the Prophet, who had also made a covenant with the Jews in Medina. Well, the truth about this covenant of Mohammed with the Jews is that within a few years, two of the three Jewish clans had been driven out of Medina, and the third one was slaughtered to the last man. This statement by the Maulana only proves how dishonest he was, and that he counted on Hindus not knowing anything about Mohammed's career. The fact that Hindus quoted this

statement with enthusiasm, proves that the Maulana's estimation of the absolute Hindu ignorance was correct.

Two more recent varieties of the same *tolerant Islam* rhetoric, are the following. Asghar Ali Engineer writes : "*It is too simplistic to put [Hindus] in the category of kafirs. It is neither doing justice to the teachings of Islam nor to those of Hinduism.*"^{[230](#)}

It does complete justice to both traditions to put Hindus in the category of kafirs. They don't recognize the prophethood of Mohammed nor the exclusive pretense of his chosen deity, Allah. That makes them non-Muslims. They also do not believe in any prophetic tradition, i.e. in people who are exclusive beneficiaries of divine revelation, from whom others have no choice but to borrow knowledge about the divine. On the contrary, they believe that everybody can attain the Awakened state which gurus have been teaching. They also reject the notion that the final truth is contained in one book : any book is merely an attempt to approximate in the terms of discursive or poetic reason the unspeakable truth, and it cannot be more than one viewpoint among others.

Disregarding the essential difference between the role of Sutras and Shastras among the Hindus, and that of Scripture among the Jewish and Christian *people of the Book*, we might say that all of them at least use books in their religious practice. But what about tribals for whom writings and a fortiori Scriptures are simply unknown ? By no manipulation can Asghar Ali Engineer recognize them as *people of the Book*. So they are unmitigated Kafirs, and have to be given a choice between Islam and death. That is the true tradition of Islam. And if Mr. Engineer wants to bring communal amity, he should not try to bring people in the *people of the Book* denomination, but repudiate the notion of Kafir (with its attached doctrine of killing or forcibly converting them) altogether. Considering Hindus or tribals as Kafirs is not just *simplistic*, it is anti- human and criminal.

Until Mr. Engineer rejects the Islamic division of mankind into Muslims and Kafirs, with or without the intermediate category of *people of the Book*, he is exactly as guilty of communal strife as the worst fundamentalist. Defeat him.

Why does Mr. Engineer want to declare the Hindus *people of the Book*? The practical impact is, that they can become Zimmis, *protected ones*. That means, third-class citizens in an Islamic state. When he and the *secularists* want to shout abuse at Hindu Rashtra, they say it will be a theocratic state in which the Muslims will be second-class citizens, and they call that *fascism*. That same thing which they call fascism when they wrongly attribute it to Hindu Rashtra, is effectively accepted in the case of a Muslim Rashtra, such as Pakistan. I at least have never heard any of them refer to Pakistan as *fascist*. Muslim Rashtra is not only not called *fascism*: Mr. Engineer even seems to take it for granted as a political framework, and therefore he tries to secure a place for the Hindus in it by declaring them *people of the Book*, rather than just Kafirs who could not be tolerated alive. Well how generous of him.

The category *people of the Book* is an arch-communalist notion, an integral part of a doctrine which divides humanity into Muslims or Momins (rulers and freemen, the first-and second-class citizens), Zimmi Kafirs (inferior third-class citizens), and non-Zimmi Kafirs (to be exterminated). I agree with the secularists that no compromise whatsoever should be made with communalism. Therefore I advocate an all-out intellectual attack on this distinction between Momins, Kafirs and Zimmis, the communalist doctrine par excellence.

Asghar Ali Engineer continues his theological discourse as follows : "*The holy Prophet, in his treaty with the Zoroastrians of Bahrain, recognized them as ahl-al-kitab (people of the book) though they are not mentioned in the Quran as such. No wonder that some Sufi saints like Jan- i-Jahan considered the Hindus too as people of the book.*" One more good reason to show no interest whatsoever in Mr. Engineer's little favour of including Hindus in the *people of the Book*, is the effective record of the treatment of the Zimmis. All right, in a generous (or maybe just tactical) gesture of the Prophet, the Zoroastrians of Bahrain were recognized as *people of the Book*; but where are they now ? Apart from a few thousand Zoroastrians living in abject poverty in a few villages in Iran, the Zoroastrians have been wiped out by Islam (only those who fled to Hindusthan have survived and prospered). If Sufis and *moderate Muslims* want to recognize Hindus as

people of the Book, they may have the same future in mind for them as for the Zoroastrians of Bahrain.

The second recent example of a *moderate Muslim* trying to fool Hindus, is Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. He quotes from an Arabic book, so maybe the fault lies with its writer, though from a Maulana I would expect some familiarity with early Islamic history. He tells the following story : "*Jama Masjid in Damascus built during the early period of Islam under Ummayyad rule...saw its completion in 715 and is in existence till today. But in its early days, the Christians objected to a strip of land belonging to an old abandoned church having been annexed during its construction*".²³¹

So, in the centre of the metropolis Damascus, there was an *old abandoned church*? The truth of the matter is that this church was a famous and celebrated cathedral. The Christians were *people of the Book*, so they became *Zimmis* and could, after the surrender of Damascus to the Muslims, keep their places of worship (though not build new ones). But, as already mentioned in [ch.8.6](#), the Muslims badly wanted to take over this big building, so the Christians had to bribe the Caliph in order to prevent the Muslims from taking it over, After decades of taking ever bigger bribes, the Caliph gave in to Muslim pressure, and had the cathedral transformed into a *Jama Masjid*. So, if moderate Maulanas tell you stories, don't believe them.

But he continues : "*A delegation of Christian Syrians, therefore, came to Umar the second...with the complaint that his predecessor had annexed a part of the church, having incorporated it into the building of the mosque.*" So, they risked trouble with the Muslim ruler for nothing but an *old abandoned church*, and that in an age when there was no need of creating communal friction in order to built vote-banks.

Now we seek justice from you, they said. Umar ibn Abdal-Aziz promptly appointed Muhammad ibn Suwayd an- Nahri as the arbiter....The latter...arrived at the conclusion that the Christians were justified in their complaint. Then Umar issued orders for the part of the mosque which belonged to the church to be returned in its entirety to the Christians. However, this order was never executed, for the Christians had only intended to put Islamic justice to the test. When they found that it came up to the mark, they gladly announced that they were happy to donate this part

of the church to the mosque. **Conclusions:** even in the story, the Christians don't get redress. This is explained as a voluntary gesture, but it must have been just as voluntary as Rushdie's embracing Islam. And in reality, the Christians were not even protected against the take-over of their cathedral by their Zimmi status.

So, Pagans are not interested in recognition as *people of the Book*. They want moderate Muslims to stop denying the intolerance inherent in Islamic theology. They want them to give up the anti-human division of humanity in Muslims, Zimmi Kafirs, and Kafirs for whom there is no mercy.

The fundamental intolerance and fanaticism of Islam are an undeniable fact. They can readily be proven from a large number of Quranic verses. Since quoting the Quran may get this book banned, I will merely give the verse numbers, so you can check it for yourself. Islam promises hell to the Kafirs in Quran 3:85, 4:56, 5:37, 5:72, 8:55, 9:28, 15:2, 21:98-100, 22:19-22, 22:56-57, 25:17-19, 25:55, 29:53-55, 31:13, 66:9, 68:10-13, 72:14-15, 98-51. Islam warns against mixing with Kafirs in Quran 2:21, 3:28, 3:118, 5:51, 5:144, 9:7, 9:28, 58:23, 60:4. Islam calls on Muslims to wage war against the Kafirs in Quran 2:191, 2:193, 4:66, 4:84, 5:33, 8:12, 8:15-18, 8:39, 8:59-60, 8:65, 9:2-3, 9:5, 9:14, 9:29, 9:39, 9:73, 9:111, 9:123, 25:52, 37:22-23, 47:4-5, 48:29, 69:30-37. Islam encourages the war against the Kafirs by glorifying it in Quran 2:216, 9:41, 49:15, or by promising lust in paradise to the Shaheeds who die in such a war, in Quran 3:142, 3:157-158, 9:20--21. The Hadis is also explicit enough, and proves that Prophet put the Quranic injunctions into practice.

However, defenders of the Faith have been trying to prove that Islam is tolerant. They have some very few arguments, and these seem convincing as long as they are not closely scrutinized (like the Maulana's reference to the Medina covenant with the Jews)²³². One classic is: "*There is no compulsion in religion*" (2:256). Isn't that tolerant? Well, when people quote from the Quran to prove that Islam is inhuman and fanatical, the standard reply is: *But you are quoting out of context*. So, let us not make that mistake here, for the context is the key to the meaning of the text. If we read the whole passage, we find that it ends by stating: *But those who don't listen,... they are the people of the Fire, and will live forever in it*. So, while

not mentioning the duty of war against the unbelievers, the passage at least confirms that they will go to hell forever.

The thrust of this passage is that Allah himself chooses who becomes Muslim and who doesn't. Not that the two options are equal: the Muslim will enjoy paradise, the Kafir will suffer forever in hell. But Allah says that the Prophet need not worry, since it is Allah who makes people convert. The larger context of this passage is that Mohammed is getting discouraged because the Arabs, like the Jews, ridicule his claim of Prophethood, so Allah gives him some confidence by assuring him that these care of by Himself. At any rate, this Quranic verse does not at all say that it is all right to stick to another religion than Islam. Only by carefully keeping the context out of view, can it be presented as a statement of tolerance.

The same situation explains Quran 10:99: "*If the Lord had wanted, all people would have entered the Faith together.*" Will you then force people to accept Islam. But when he is weak, he gets revelations that Allah will take care of everything, even of conversations (an application of the Islamic notion of Taqdeer, fate or divine pre- ordination).

The same thing counts for this other verse presented as proof of Islamic tolerance: "*Unto you your religion, unto me my religion*". (Quran 109:6) This appears in one of the earliest Suras, when Mohammed is still weak and unimportant. The Sura says repetitively that : "*I do not serve what you serve, I will not worship what you will worship,...To you your religion, to me my religion*". All it says is that Mohammed breaks with the Meccan religion, and that he doesn't want to have anything to do with it. He rejects all *composite culture* and proclaims the incompatibility of the prevalent religion and his own Islam. This sura is not yet a declaration of war on the Pagan religions of Arabia and of the entire world, but it is certainly a preamble to such a declaration of war. At that time, Mohammed could not yet afford more than such a formal distancing from the prevalent religion, because he was not yet strong enough for an all-out confrontation.

Only by concealing the proper context, can one create the impression that Islam contains even one single positive injunction to tolerant co-existence and pluralism.

So, let us not be fooled by two or three seemingly tolerant statements in the Quran. Once Mohammed was powerful, and had a free choice between tolerance and intolerance, he shed all tactical semblance of *live and let live*, and opted for persecution and mass-slaughter of Kafirs. In the Medina Suras, there is ample testimony of Allah's desire that Muslim make war on the Kafirs, and that they do not anyhow integrate and make friendship with them. We can safely say that the Quran does teach intolerance. Those *moderate* Muslims who deny this, thereby prove that they are apologists who put the interests of Islam higher than the truth. Expose them.

However, it is equally a historical fact that people have outgrown the fanaticism present in the earlier layers of their tradition. When you read how Moses and Joshua exterminated the tribes that stood in the way of the chosen people, all at Yahweh's explicit command, you would expect the Jews, the followers of Moses, to be ruthless persecutors of non-Jews. But in fact, for the last fourteen centuries, the Jews have not persecuted anyone.^{[233](#)} Even today, now that they have a state, they are the ones who have guaranteed freedom of worship as well as free access to the sacred places of Judaism, Christianity and Islam (as well as Baha'ism) for the respective believers, in contrast to the earlier Islamic regime. If there is tension with the non-Jews of the area, it is not due to any persecution in the name of Yahweh of Moses. Even the Biblical justification for the Israeli hold over Palestine, is only put forward by a minority of religious *fundamentalists*: for most Israelis and for their secular government, it is merely a matter of living in a sustainable state with defensible borders, which is a legitimate secular concern.^{[234](#)}

So, if the Jews could grow out of the stage of bloody persecution, and develop a stable attitude of *live and let live* long ago, can the Muslims not do the same?

The fact that so many Muslim apologists are saying that Islam is really very tolerant, raises hopes that, regardless of what the Quran says, they at least accept that tolerance is a positive value. Of the simple Muslims who think Islam consists of drinking alcohol or eating pork, this tolerance is not a problem. But for Muslims who know Islamic doctrine and Islam's exclusivist claims, it is a lot more difficult. And many seeming champions

of tolerance and communal amity are at second sight only more sophisticated than their separatist brethren.

Take the case of those Muslims who opposed Jinnah and his *communalist* demand for partition. While Aligarh was a hotbed of Pakistani agitation, the Deoband school advocated the gradual Islamization of the entire united India. The godfather of modern Islamic fundamentalism, Maulana Maudoodi, was one of the staunchest opponents of Partition. He claimed that the Muslims had a right to rule all of India. In fact, many Hindus are glad that India was partitioned. They argue that a Muslim population of 24% (now more than 30%) in united India would never allowed Hindu society to function, and would have created trouble until it was safely and totally in power.

So if today *moderate Muslims* criticize Pakistan and the policies that led to Partition, I wonder if there is not some pan-Islamist design behind it.^{[235](#)} At any rate, Maulana Azad, that moderate that would have given 50% of all power positions to the Muslims, with the rest to be divided between Hindus, Christians, Ambedkarites, and others. Short, Azad was in favour of a Muslim India.

So, before the Muslim moderates can become credible, they will have to do better than their predecessors of the Azad generation, who, on closer inspection, turn out to be just as Muslim-imperialist as the *communalists*. A very little gesture, by far not sufficient but a minimum proof of good intention, would be that they come out in support of Salman Rushdie. Now that the man has become a Muslim, this doesn't even require any deals Kafirs anymore. On December 28, 1990, Rushdie made an appeal to the Indian Muslims to come out and convince the Iranian leadership to cancel the death sentence.^{[236](#)} So, far, I have not seen this little gesture from any influence to stop the oppression of the non-Muslims in Pakistan, Bangla Desh and Kashmir.

The gentle scenario for the future is that Muslim leaders accept the value of tolerance and pluralism, and that they continue for some time to swear by the Quran even while effectively repudiating its intrinsic intolerance. Since crores of people have a sentimental attachment to the forms and names of

Islam, the body of Islam will be kept alive for some more time, even while its spirit is giving way to the rational humanist spirit. The Hindu solution for Islam is not a dramatic mass-conversion, but a change in the spirit even while leaving the outer form intact. Allow the Muslims a stage of upholding the Quran rhetoric but claiming that it means something else than what it says. After that stage, the empty husk of Islam, with its Jihad phraseology and prophetic pretense, will be dropped easily.

This is the approach which Mahatma Gandhi tried: respecting the Scriptural and organizational body of Islam, and trying to influence and change its spirit. The Mahatma's failure should be studied, together with the success of the humanists in Europe who managed to create an intellectual climate in which Christians started outgrowing their exclusivism and self-righteousness (and mostly also Christianity itself). One conspicuous difference is that the Mahatma never criticized Islam, while the European humanists did criticize the evils of Christianity. In order to encourage the monotheists to discover the value of pluralism and tolerance, it is necessary to make a clear diagnosis of their exclusivism and intolerance, and to be frank about it.

13.5 How to say it

Since we cannot be fooled by the humanist pretenses of Muslim propagandists, we will henceforth be straightforward about the following established facts concerning Islam. Islam is an ideology based on an unreasonable claim to the possession of a unique and final revelation from the Creator of this universe. Islam makes a dangerous division in humanity between believers and unbelievers, and builds an absurd theology around it: for the superficial act of declaring or not declaring belief in Mohammed's presence at prophethood, the one half will enjoy eternal lust in heaven, while the other will suffer eternal damnation in hell. Islam preaches and practices the systematic oppression and persecution of the non-Muslims. Because of its belief that the Quran, the historically contingent product of Mohammed's own limited mind, is God's eternal and final revelation, Islam prevents itself from adapting to new developments. It is bound to become

backward, and it loses itself in outward details that do not have an authentic stamp of *eternity* at all.

All right, we reject Islam. And we can say to the Hindus that there is no reason at all to feel that Islam is somehow superior to Hinduism. On the contrary, Islam is a very defective ideology, very crude and superficial. It is also anti-humanist, since it makes the absolute distinction in mankind between Muslims and non-Muslims, who have a totally different status both in this world and in the next. Now, in this age, you cannot say those things to one group without another group also knowing about it, if at all you would want to proceed that secretively. How to say these things, knowing that Muslims are listening too?

For all his tactical mistakes, Mahatma Gandhi essentially had a powerful vision, centered on two concepts: satya (truth) and ahimsa (non-violence). We have to say the truth about Islam, but in a non-violent way. We have to combine truthfulness about Islam with non-violence and even non-hurtfulness towards the Muslims.

Being sensitive means: taking into account the way the other person will perceive things. So, let us imagine the situation of the Muslim regarding this discussion. Suppose you have believed that Mohammed was God's unique and final spokesman, and that his life is to be emulated in every way. And then you get to here people say, with an air of competence, that these revelations were only in Mohammed's head, that no sane person hears voices the way Mohammed did, that these revelations were very much centered around Mohammed's life situation and there is nothing universal and eternal (i.e. worthy of the eternal Creator) about them. In other words: all you have believed in, is a big mistake. Does that not cause a big crisis?

It depends on whether you believe the skeptics or not. If you don't believe them, you may get angry with them. You may even issue a fatwa condemning them to death. But this anger will partly be determined by the presentation of the skeptical viewpoint. If someone express his viewpoint in a personal conversation, and also patiently listens to your objections, it will be easier to tolerate than if someone speaks scornfully about your beliefs or mocks them in public.

If you are inclined to believe the skeptical viewpoint, you get into an inner rethinking of all the things that are somehow linked with the belief system. But once you get through that, it is a liberating experience. I have seen so many people of my generation, as well as some older people, go through this process of outgrowing Christianity. It is a very interesting experience. You just wouldn't want to have missed it.

This large-scale process of people outgrowing the Christian belief system has seldom been the result of anti-Christian campaign. It has gone gradually, with people developing doubts and sharing these with friends, or with coming across books that opened up a different view on the life of the life of the soul. Where anti- religion campaigns in the Soviet block have failed, this gradually spreading of the spirit of free inquiry has severely undermined the hold of Christianity on the European mind.

This is the way the hold of unwholesome Islamic doctrines over people's minds will have to be tackled. It is useless to propagandistically beat it out of them, it is even counterproductive. Look where Islam really lost it grip. Earlier in this century, people in countries like Iran and Egypt came under the influence of modernity, and gradually dropped Islamic ways and beliefs. They also rediscovered their glorious pre-Islamic past. This effect was stronger in proportion to the degree of education. There was no pressure on them to leave Islam, they themselves discovered that there are other things to life. Of course, we know that the process has been reversed in the seventies and eighties. But that is only temporary, because the relevant cultural factors at work in the earlier part of the century, are still there, and growing stronger.

As people are mentally or formally leaving a religion, you see the religion also opening up and listening to its critics. As people criticized Roman Catholicism, the Church itself changed : it dropped the Inquisition, the Index, the forced conversions, the intolerance of non- Church-members in Catholic institutions. It recognized the values of humanism, and corrected its social philosophy accordingly. In other words: the Church had ideologically been put on the defensive, and therefore it gave up its self-righteousness.

Similarly, Islam has to be put ideologically on the defensive. One should not go from door to door telling an unwilling Muslim audience what you think of their Prophet. Let the Muslims discover for themselves what the rational and scholarly views on the Prophet and the Islamic doctrines are. Those who are interested, will certainly find out what is being said in the public arena, and within non-Muslim communities, there Islam should definitely be put on the defensive.

Imagine the day when the fanatic leaders in the Muslim community notice: *"On, people have found out that the Prophet taught something else than brotherhood. They know that the wars on the infidels have not been waged 'in spite of the Prophet's teaching of tolerance' but rather in fulfillment of the Prophet's injunctions. They have realized that the infidel society was not that much worse than Islamic society, and in many respects actually better."* That day they are bound to lose some of their self-righteousness. When a thief realizes people are aware of his thieving designs, he will think twice before starting again. Today these Muslim fanatics bask in all the praises heaped on Islam, and enjoy all the self-criticism among the Hindus: all this merely vindicates their sense of divine mission.

The day when Muslims join the humanist culture and freely express their uninterestedness in the claims of the prophet, and get supported by society at large, the fanatics will start doubting their case.

At the human level, I am aware that at first it may be very painful for those people who have really devoted their lives to Islam, to find out about its not so divine and not so superior nature. I really feel for them. Giving up one's beliefs is harder in proportion to the part of one's life that one has invested in them.

A Jesuit who, later in life, during his Bible research, started seeing that the Bible is really just a human creation, and that there is little God-given and eternal about the Christian teachings, morals and institutions, wrote in the epilogue to one of his scholarly books : *"This has been a very painful process for me. Finding out that one has wasted one's life on absurd beliefs..."*²³⁷ Not that he regretted having come to this insight : the painful thing was that it had happened so late in life, that he had already missed so

much because of the narrow Christian theological window through which he had experienced life so far. So, I can imagine that realizing the unfoundedness of one's fond belief in belonging to a superior part of humanity, chosen for rule in this world and eternal lust in the next, may create a bitter feeling. Not bitterness against those who helped you to wake up from your fond illusions (if anything, jealousy because they were free from this particular illusion before you), but a kind of bitterness against your own earlier gullibility.

We may conclude that in exposing the falsehood and the inglorious record of Islam, we have to proceed in a dispassionate way, free of triumphalism, as gently as humanly possible.

Chapter 14. Hindu Fascism

14.1. Hinduism, Hitler's Mother?

A Contention often heard in secularist circles, is that this Hindu revivalism is a form of *Hindu fascism*. Specifically, a BJP in power would soon reveal itself to be a Nazi government-- but then it would be too late. I will not bother about quoting all the people who have made such allegations (there are many), and just deal with the substance of this allegation.

Actually, there are two radically different allegation of *Hindu fascism*. One merely is an allegation against the current wave of *Hindu communalism*. The other one says, that Hinduism is intrinsically fascist. The best-known proponent of the latter theory is V.T. Rajshekar, who publishes the fortnightly Dalit Voice from Bangalore. He builds his views on Ambedkar's. But at the same time, he strongly subscribes to the theory that the Aryans invaded India, and instituted the cast system to preserve their racial purity, much like the Apartheid system in South Africa.²³⁸

In fact, all his anti-Hindu views are put forward in ethnic and even racial terminology. The non-caste Hindus and the minorities are for him the *oppressed nations of India*, oppressed by the Aryan invaders who constitute the upper castes.

Of course, the racial view of caste, a product of the British fascination for race theories, has been debunked scientifically.²³⁹ Even Ambedkar rejected it.²⁴⁰ By now, the whole notion of Aryan invasions has come under fire. Western scholars start recognizing what many Indian scholars have since long pointed out : that there is not a single piece of proof for the whole theory, and that all the known relevant facts can just as well be explained with alternative and equally coherent theories.

But since is lost on Mr. Rajshekar. He has published a book in the West, titled Dalit -- the Black Untouchables of India. On the cover is a photograph

of, I presume, the writer. And the first thing you notice is : but this man is not black. He is quite a *Caucasian*, or white man, though slightly more suntanned than Europeans, but not at all a negroid type. And you start to realize : this man is a crackpot. In order to attract American Black support, or for other propaganda reasons, he makes the caste system into a racial issue. The rich white Aryan Brahmin invaders oppress the poor black non-Aryan Shudra natives.^{[241](#)}

Now this has a lot to do with Hitler. He too was a crank racist. While the reprehensible racism in South Africa is at least based on a actual racial difference between black and white, Hitler based his anti-Jewish racism on the erroneous notion that the difference between Germans and Jews is racial, which is biological nonsense. Moreover, he too had borrowed the concept of the *Aryan race*, which the British had developed in India, but which was totally alien to the Hindu tradition. Rajshekar has borrowed the same theory in the same place. He holds the same kind of crank notion that the difference between upper and lower castes is a racial one. So, Hitler-Rajshekar bhai-bhai. With them, everything gets drawn into racial categories. The only difference is that Hitler is on the side of the Aryan race, while Rajshekar is on the opposite side.

Thus, in an article about the Israeli technician Mordechai Vanunu, Dalit Voice says that he is a Sephardic Jew (migrated from the Muslim countries), who are oppressed by the Ashkenazi Jews (migrated from Europe, and founders of Israel). When the technician revealed to the world some nuclear secrets of Israel, this was portrayed as an element in the ethnic struggle of oppressed (*dalit*) Sephardim against Zionist Ashkenazim, who also oppress the Palestinians. So it all fits : Dalits and Muslims should form a front against the Brahmins, therefore Dalits support the Palestinians, therefore they oppose the Zionists who are Ashkenazi Jews, and link up with the oppressed Sephardic Jews. But here the racist logic breaks down : it so happens that the hard-liners in Israel, like many in the Likud Party, are precisely these Sephardim, who have fled Muslim countries and have no love lost for the Arabs, while the Ashkenazim are generally more liberal. This goes to show once more the nonsense of these racial conspiracy theories on which the Hitler and Rajshekars of this world feed.

So, what remains for the enemies of Hinduism to dub intrinsically fascist about Hinduism? The caste system, of course. Even if it is not racist, it is not equalitarian and institutionalizes inequality on the basis of people's birth (just like in racism). Therefore, the caste system is reprehensible. And therefore Hinduism is reprehensible (through a remote influence of Marxism, everything gets reduced to its social dimension, so Hinduism equals caste system).

This matter is far too large and complex to decide in just one chapter, so I will limit myself here to some general remarks. Firstly, there is a distinction between theory and practice. This may seem an easy way out, often used by soft-Leftists when confronted with criticism of the implementation of socialist theory in the praxis of the Soviet system (*But that is not the real socialism !*). But the distinction is pertinent. On the one hand there were ideologues of the four varnas, the functions in society with their allotted duties and privileges, and they wrote Shastras in which they tried to fit reality into the scheme, complete with a slant in favour of their own caste. On the other there was the existing reality of jatis, roughly endogamous groups, roughly coinciding with occupations, but far more diverse and in motion than the crystalline theoretical framework of Chaturvarnya.

Secondly, this social system did not exist in isolation. Thus, centuries of foreign domination must have had an impact on it. We can say a priori that when leading groups in society come to groan under the weight of foreign oppression, they themselves will weigh heavier on the lower groups. That would not be the case if the new rulers would engage in reform of the existing society, but the Muslims never did this (in spite of the new myths about Islam as bringing socialist reforms). A society that is put on the defensive, will harden and develop internal friction. Again it may sound like an easy explanation, but it is just quite plausible that a part of the *inhuman* traits of the caste system as recent generations found it, must be attributed to later outside influences like the impoverishing, brutalizing and demoralizing effect of Muslim rule.

When we study its theoretical conception, we find that the caste system is quite the opposite of Nazism in essential respects. Let us think clearly about

this very charged matter. In the caste system, we may distinguish the following components:

1. In society, different groups are recognized.
2. These groups have their own mores and duties.
3. Membership of a group is determined by birth.
4. On the basis of their function, a ritual hierarchy exists between these group, which does not coincide with either wealth or actual social power.

The first point says merely that difference is recognized. This is not as evident as it sounds. Islam and Communism champion *equality*, which in practice means uniformity.

The second point means that these groups are defined by the role they play in society, and that duties as also privileges are allotted accordingly. This does not mean that the higher ones grab all the privileges. Thus, one who has the duty to guide society by communicating knowledge, commits a crime when he is untruthful, or drunk, whereas these things are of no consequence when committed by a manual labourer. This allotting of duties also concerns the different age-groups. As any anthropologist can tell you, the distribution of duties among age-groups is one of the most evident features of tribal society. That is why the varna division is considered together with the division of life in stages, the ashramas, so that Hindu social philosophy is known as Varnashramadharma. While this recognition of different roles with their own duties and privileges is by no means a complete answer to every possible social question, it at least provides a framework which is perfectly true to universal human experience.

The third point means that one's qualities are largely determined by birth. The most natural division of mankind, the two sexes, a division which brings with it a definite role, duties and privileges, is determined by birth. One's gunas or qualities, which determine one's vocation in society, are in turn partly determined by heredity. At this point Hindu society has hardened a statistical law, which generally makes people follow in their parents' footsteps, into a rigid steel frame. In reality, an individual's swadharma (own duty, own way) may differ from that of his parents, and that is why the Bhagavad Gita (which is of course only one voice in the plurality of

Hindu tradition) simply states that one's varna is determined by one's guna (quality, type), regardless of whether this guna is in turn determined by heredity, by environment and education, or who knows, by the stars at birth. Of course, this is a point where historically the divergence between theory and practice has become quite substantial.

The fourth point is to modern socialists perhaps the most horrible : a hierarchy between the groups. Well, there is an undeniable hierarchy between social functions, even where an equalitarian law system has firmly taken root. Thus, an employee is equal, as a human being and as a citizen, to his employer; the work both do is equally indispensable; yet, the employee's work is by definition determined by the tasks his employer allots him. So, while there is equality between human beings, there is a logical hierarchy between functions. In that sense, the Vaishya function is *superior* to the Shudra function. Similarly, a ruler, even while autonomous in his decisions (remember secularism), is dependent on knowledge and a social philosophy, but the thinkers who devise this intellectual and ideological framework, should be independent in their thinking, free from the rulers' interference. In that sense, the Brahmin function is logically *superior* to the Kshatriya function, even while rulers are more powerful and wealthy than thinkers.

In my opinion, it is this logical hierarchy of social functions which the early ideologues of Varnashramadharma had in mind. It is but human that people with a higher function were also honoured accordingly. But in how far that was translated into a cruel anti-human inequality in actual village and city life, is another matter. It is too vast to go into it here. Suffice it to say that I have become a bit skeptical of the abysmally grim picture of the caste system which all of us have been fed, after actually living among Hindus of both high and low castes, and after studying the research done by modern-educated Indian scholars. As Meenakshi Jain has indicated, it is not because certain Brahmins were particular about not eating with other people etc., that other castes felt inferior or oppressed by this uptight and unprofitable kind of behaviour (much less inclined to imitate the difficult Brahmin lifestyle, as the Sanskritization theory would have it).

In Catholic circles, like in religion class, we used to get some testimonies from the missions, now and then. When asked for examples of how horrible the caste system is, missionaries would always mention the distance Brahmins keep from the *inferior* non-Brahmins. But so what? For orthodox Brahmins, as I have known some in Varanasi, I myself am an avarna, and they will not have dinner with me. But I don't feel offended by that. If they think I am impure (and I am : I have eaten many a beef steak in my life), then that is their choice. I don't really care, and I think most Shudras in India's long history didn't care. But they did not *not care* in the intolerant way of the iconoclastic modernists, who like to trample on somebody else's rules and taboos : while they themselves did not observe the near-obsessive purity rules of Brahmins, they would not think of forcing Brahmins out of their purist seclusion.

The effort to rewrite history and to see integration instead of separation and enmity as the norm of interaction between the different communities, should not be directed to the history of Hindu-Muslim relations (where it is gross distortion), but at the history of caste relations (where it is a correction of the extremely divisive picture created by the missionaries and colonialists). There was plenty of co-operation, amity and human concern across caste lines.

On the other hand, as in other societies, there has existed oppression in Hindu society too. And this has been aggravated in the last few centuries by the decreasing prosperity, which in turn was due to Muslim oppression and plundering, to the disruption of India's economy by its forcible integration into Britain's colonial trade system, and to the victory of modern industry over the indigenous industries (which also affected non-colonies like China and Iran). Increasing poverty invariably increases social friction and oppression.

While rejecting the immensely black picture which the missionaries have painted of Hindu society, and which has been very much interiorized in the Indian collective consciousness and is still being reproduced by the self-proclaimed Ambedkarites today, we need not deny that oppression and misery existed. And it must have taken the shape of the social structure in force, which happened to be the caste system. No-one in his right mind is

inclined to denigrate the efforts at "*bringing the Backward Castes into the mainstream of Indian society*" (to use the politicians' expression). On the stand taken by the Hindutva people on the caste system, see [ch.14.2](#). Now, in essential respects the caste system is the opposite of Nazism. This counts not only for the idealized theory but even for the raw practice. First of all, this system is not at all centralized. The traditional Hindu society knows many layers of social organization : family, kula, upajati, jati, varna. Now, this layeredness of society, this devolution of many organizational functions to intermediary levels, is the strongest possible buffer against dictatorship and totalitarianism.

When analyzing why the French Revolution quickly degenerated into a reign of terror and a dictatorship, Hegel state that it was the destruction of the intermediary levels of social organization which led to this polarization between the naked individual and the all-powerful state authority.

The first task of totalitarian-minded people is to break down those organizational units which they cannot control. In Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, the protagonist of the narrative regains a measure of mental independence from Big Brother's total control, when he falls in love with some girl. Suddenly there is an emotional relationship, i.e. another form of human interaction than Big Brother's state, a bond which escapes Big Brother's control. These simple natural forms of human togetherness, like the family, the clan, the tribe, no matter what their drawbacks, are the strongest possible protection against totalitarianism.

Traditional societies all had clans and tribes. With the building of empires, these lost some of their importance. But the atomization of society into isolated individuals who find nothing above them but the all-powerful state, is largely a modern phenomenon, and fascism is one extreme outgrowth of it. It is not only factually incorrect to attribute the characteristics of fascism to a traditional society like the Hindu society, it also gives proof of a total incomprehension of larger historical categories, like modern vs. traditional, hierarchy vs. totalitarianism.

The unique thing about Hindu society is that it kept this tribe-wise and clan-wise organization even after setting up very large integrated state structures. By contrast, Mohammed, in his bid to form a state (after the

admired models of the Persian and Byzantine empires), wanted to destroy these intermediary levels. Thus, he is not at all clan- and family-minded. While Confucianism, Judaism or Hinduism are very family-centered, Islam does not ordain family stability, but gives a man all the freedom to break up the family he started, by simply declaring to his wife: Talaq Talaq Talaq. Moreover, Mohammed explicitly wanted his followers to put the loyalty to Islam above the loyalty to the clan.

One may consider this an element of universalism, rising above *narrow loyalties*. That is certainly how Muslim apologetics puts it. But the other side is that the primitive loyalty to the natural family unit merely gets replaced by another, more demanding *narrow loyalty*: to the Prophet, to Big Brother.

All dictators like uniformity. The Spanish dictator Franco worked hard to destroy the linguistic diversity in Spain by suppressing the use of Catalan and Basque. Similarly, Stalin wanted to abolish all ethnicity and language diversity. These subnational identities were anathema to a centralistic dictatorial mind. It so happens that Islam too insists on uniformity, even in very small things. In world history, it is perhaps only the Mao outfit of the Chinese communists that matches the uniformity of appearance among Muslims. Women Should wear burqa, and men should trim their beards after the Prophet's example. This outer uniformity is expressive of an imposed uniformity of behaviour and belief. I do not find this uniformist loyalty to the Prophet any more open-minded or universalist than the "narrow loyalty" to a tribe.

There is reason for suspicion against people who need to trample upon natural loyalties before they can establish their *brotherhood*. It is like a scorpion, who lifts his prey up from the ground and then stings. These natural social units are the ground under people's feet, and if you want to enlist them in your own power trip, you have to take them out of these natural units, and make them vulnerable to your claims on them, by isolating them.

It is quite possible to teach people universal values and awareness of the larger whole, without breaking open the existing divisions in society. Actually, calling clans and tribes a *division* conceals the fact that they are

just as much *units*, levels of integration. Few buildings these days are built from one massive rock ; the normal thing to do is to integrate smaller units into bigger and yet bigger ones. The global civilization which we are building today, will not be made up of scattered individuals. Organizationally, it will be a hierarchy of intermediary levels of integration, a two- way combination of unity and diversity. The current revival of ethnicity throughout the world is just one example of man's natural resistance against atomization.

The essence of Varnashramadharma, the social philosophy that allots different duties to differently minded groups of people, as well as to the different age-groups, and that allows communities to develop at intermediary levels between individual and state, is quite the opposite of the uniformization so typical of totalitarian systems.

14.2. Hindutva and the "evils of Hindu society"

In the secularists' tirades, the Hindutva people are systematically portrayed as upholders of inequality and of all the evils of Hindu society.

Remark : the very expression *evils of Hindu society*, which Nehru routinely used, is totally out of bounds when *Hindu* is replaced with *Muslim* or another community. The expression "*the crimes of the Muslim conquerors*", or "*the evils of Muslim society*" (like anti-modern backwardness, persecution of non-Muslims, slavery, the inferiority of women), are sure to provoke shouts of *communal* ! There is also no one to describe the social problems in the West as "*the evils of Christian society*", as if all worldly problems can be reduced to the impact of the prevalent religion.

In fact, the unity of Hindu society, and the promotion of the backward castes in the mainstream of society, has always been a major plank of Hindu organizations like the RSS. In its literature²⁴², the RSS boasts of having received compliments from such non-communalist people like Mahatma Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan, for its entirely caste-free structure and

working. Nonetheless, for decades after it was set up, it was mostly an organization of Brahmins and, increasingly, Vaishyas.

It seems that recently, the caste-wise composition of the RSS is changing. According to a recent report, *"much to the despair of the Marxists and secularists alike, it is not the upper caste that dominates the Sangh's shakhas. It is ironically the middle castes and rising Dalits."*²⁴³ An RSS member is quoted saying : *"All our best attended shakhas are in the poor areas, not in the alienated middle class or rich upper caste suburbs or cities or towns. In simple words, the new Sangh Swayamsevak is mostly a backward caste or Dalit."*

So, the following analysis by Sunil Adam is just another Leftist lie : *"The Muslims only serve as a negative target of Hindu consciousness so as to marginalize the contradictions of the Hindu social order and at the same time maintain the social and political status quo, which is the actual object of Hindutva."*²⁴⁴ While totally denying the historical fact of the unprovoked all-out Muslim attack on Hindu society during centuries on end, and while reducing the thrust of the Hindutva movement to an anti-Muslim thrust, it repeats the classic Marxist fallacy of reducing everything to a matter of class (c.q. caste) *contradictions*. Moreover, it ascribes to the Hindutva movement an intention of maintaining the social and political status quo: this goes contrary to all statements of intention by the Hindutva leaders.

Of course, we may be dealing here with the rhetorical trick of ascribing intentions to people : *"You say that this is what you want, but it is not what you want. I will tell you what you really want."* This is a venomous act of psychological imperialism : not even letting people decide for themselves what they intend. Unless of course you can prove from their actual behaviour that it is something else they want. But the burden of proof is on the accuser. So, the Hindutva movement is innocent of casteist conservatism until the contrary is proven. For establishing such proof, Mr. Adam will have to explain away all the anti-caste statements of Hindutva leaders (all eyewash ?) and all the testimonies that the RSS and affiliated organizations are indeed caste-free.

But no, Mr. Adam gives no proof of anything. Assured that no-one in the arena will contradict him, he continues : "*The economic and political mobility of lower castes is one of the factors that stirred the upper castes to resurrect the question of Hindu identity during the early eighties. In other words, for Hindutva to succeed it has to accomplish the twin and contradictory tasks of uniting the country's majority under the Hindu banner and also ensure that a majority among them accept their place in the social and political hierarchy prescribed by the pristine Brahminical religion...*"

Now, this is where Mr. V.P. Singh's decision to implement the Mandal Commission Report recommendations comes in. This Commission recommended that, after the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, who have been getting 22.5% reservations in recruitment and promotions in government service as well as in education (though these quota have not been filled up in many cases), the principle of reservation be extended to the Other Backward Castes (*Classes*, says the Report, but then it enumerates castes). V.P. Singh's decision was clearly meant to attract the Backward Caste vote (46% of the Indian population, according to an old census). It could at the same time split the Hindu vote, pitting high against low castes.

Opponents feared that this split would not be limited to election day, and that Mandal would tear the whole social fabric apart. Enemies of Hindu society also looked at it that way. Said Prof. Rajni Kothari : "*The Mandal Report has the potential to finish off the supremacy of Vedic Hinduism.*" The effect of the caste-based reservations would be, to strengthen caste identity (with opposing caste interest). But while in traditional society the caste system was a harmony model (this nice-sounding term is a curse to Marxist ears), this newly strengthened caste consciousness would foment caste enmity. It would also frustrate the drive to unify Hindu society.

As Mr. Adam says : "*It is this [Hindu-unifying] scheme of things that the Mandal Report... is capable of upsetting. Whether the Hindu identity will submerge caste identity or vice versa will depend on which is a better agent of politicization, caste or religion. In other words, India today has the paradoxical choice of choosing between caste, which has a secularizing impact, and Hindutva which can lead the nation to an unknown destiny.*"

Paradoxical indeed. While anti-Hindu pamphletary and rhetoric largely focuses on the horrors of the caste system, which is depicted as intrinsic to this horrible Hinduism, we now get to read that caste will break Hinduism. Caste is the *evil of Hindu society*, it is a *hierarchy prescribed by the pristine Brahminical religion*, but now we get to read that it *has a secularizing impact*.

It is not only a logical paradox, or rather contradiction. There is also a moral contradiction in Mr. Adam's reasoning, which I would re-word as follows : "*Hinduism is reprehensible because of caste ; because we want to kill caste, we want to kill Hinduism ; now, in order to kill Hinduism, we are going to strengthen caste.*" These secularists have been saying that they think they can use it as a weapon against Hinduism, they have no scruples in promoting it as progressive and *secularizing*. So, the Janata Dal people who have been decrying the Janmabhoomi movement as a threat to national unity, as well as the communists (from whom one had expected many ugly things, but not the promotion of a non-Marxist category like casteism), as well as most non- Congress secularists, have applauded the divisive Mandal plan.

Anyway, while the secularists use every occasion to demonstrate how unprincipled they are except for their commitment to the destruction of Hinduism, Hindus need not unduly worry over the issue of caste-based reservations. Its impact would not be all that deep. In some southern states, large reservation schemes have already been implemented during the eighties. While it is said that these have harmed the efficiency of the administration, they have not spectacularly affected caste relations. And while it may be unfair against upper-caste people, it may have the beneficial effect of encouraging them to enter and develop the private sector, instead of settling for a life in the bureaucracy.

If I may make a few blunt generalizations about caste, I would venture to say that the rise of the Backward Castes may well be a very beneficial development for Hindu society. When I look at the caste titles of the Communist leaders and of the most rabid secularists, I notice they are mostly high-caste people. The upper castes have intensely collaborated with the Muslim and then the British ruler, they are largely an alienated lot with

little sympathy for their own culture and society. Some of them, in fairness, have fought until their back was broken. Others have simply prostituted themselves with the rulers for generations. By contrast, the lower castes have fought the Muslim invaders tooth and nail. Contrary to the modern myths of Islam bringing relief to the oppressed low-castes, they suffered badly under the Islamic onslaught : e.g. the lands the Muslim rulers took to set up their zamindari were mostly taken from these agricultural and cattle-rearing castes.²⁴⁵ Moreover, thanks to their limited schooling, these low-castes have not yet massively imbibed all this pro-Muslim and anti- Hindu propaganda that passes as history in the school curricula. So today, the Backward Castes are not only the numerical centre of gravity in a democratic Hindu society, they are also less contaminated with anti-Hindu bias.

With that, I have said more than enough in terms of caste considerations. The real work for revitalizing Hindu society has to be done by individuals, and these are found in any caste and community.

Incidentally, the upheaval over Mandal has brought out a fact which should be rather embarrassing for the missionary propaganda. The *Dalit Christians* are low- caste people who have been lured into conversion with the promise of (1) eternal Salvation by Jesus Christ the Saviour, our Lord, and (2) freedom from the low-caste status as well as from poverty. These Dalit Christians held a demonstration in Delhi to demand reservations, on the plea that they are still as poor and low-caste as before conversion.

The Ram Janmabhoomi movement has demonstrated, more than anything else, the fact that Backward Castes and Scheduled Castes and Tribes, in spite of all the ploys to wean them away from Hinduism, still very much identify themselves with Hindu demands, such as a symbolic restoration of the damage Islam has done. In the tribal belt in southern Bihar, Mr. Advani's rathayatra got a rousing welcome.

The communal riots too show how the efforts by Muslim parties and by the anti-Hindu Bahujan Samaj Party to forge an alliance of low-castes and Muslims against the high-castes, are not having much of the desired result. In the Hyderabad riots, Muslims attacked a Harijan quarter, primarily because they expected these Harijans to be unorganized and weak. A local

Harijan leader has confirmed this to me. Even more telling was the violence in Bijnor, U.P. on October 30. There, the District Magistrate confirmed to journalists that the violence had been instigated by a local Muslim politician, and he added that the city was a stronghold of the BSP, but that the communal riots had just as much pitted the Muslims against the Harijans.²⁴⁶ The Ghaziabad riot on 26 January 1991, with nine casualties, was nothing but an attack of a Muslim pro-Saddam demonstration on Valmikis (a Scheduled Caste) who were celebrating Republic Day.²⁴⁷

These incidents conform to a larger pattern in Indian history. Contrary to the fables of the low-castes being sympathetic towards Islam, it is they who have always opposed it tooth and nail. Today in Pakistan, the large majority of the remaining Hindus are very poor Backward Caste people. If Islam is so good for them, and Hinduism so harsh, why have they continued to stick to Hinduism and suffered so much trouble and oppression by Islamic society for it? It is time we realize that the caste system has in fact protected Hindu society against total islamization, and that even low-caste people took pride in their caste so that they preferred their place in Hindu society to absorption in the atomized Muslim community.²⁴⁸

So, the stand of the Hindutva people is not : Hinduism has sinned terribly by having this caste system, therefore it has to imitate Islam and abolish caste. It is rather :the caste system had its use sometime in the past, over the centuries it has come to carry a lot of unhealthy social equations and attitudes, and now it has become socially irrelevant and a factor of divisiveness, therefore it is time for us to abandon it.

14.3. Arya and Swastika

A very crude kind of anti-Hindu propaganda, sometimes used by American Protestant sects in *warning* the youth against the dangers of Hare Krishna etc., points out that Hinduism and Nazism have a central symbol in common : the swastika. I have also heard the comparison from Ambedkarites who, taking V.T. Rajshekar's lead, systematically refer to Hindus as "Hindu Nazis".²⁴⁹

For the latter category, it may be of interest to know that the swastika is just as much a central symbol in Buddhism, Ambedkar's chosen religion. In China, the swastika is known as a Buddhist symbol. Moreover, in the Aryan mythology of the post-Ambedkar Ambedkarites (if a teacher gets killed, it is by his pupils), the Hindus were invaders who destroyed the Indus civilization, of which the Dalits are the legitimate descendants. Now, this *pre-Hindu* Indus civilization already used the swastika. The swastika is quite a sanatana symbol, not bound up with any nation or ideology. It is also found among peoples outside the Hindu sphere of influence.

It is because of his fallacious doctrine of the *Aryan race* that conquered both Europe and South Asia, and because of a mistaken belief that the swastika was typical of the Aryan peoples, that Hitler adopted this symbol as a symbol of his Aryan state. But of course, the legitimate *Aryans*, i.e. the Sanatana Dharma of whatever ethnicity or race, and of whatever sect including Buddhism, cannot be blamed for Hitler's misconceptions nor for Hitler's crimes that gave a bad connotation to this symbol.

People who believe in magic, and in the independent power of symbols, infer from this primary belief, that Hitler's spectacular rise to power may have been due to the *power inherent in the swastika*. In a moralistic variant on this superstitious theme, some people believe that the evil which Hitler committed under the swastika flag, must somehow be inherent in the swastika symbol. And from there, as they keep on inferring, they start suspecting that some mysterious evil is inherent in Hindu culture.

This reversal of the swastika's meaning, from a sign of luck (always depicted on the hand of opulent Ganesh) to a sign of evil, is somewhat like the story of the Christian image of the devil : he is depicted with buck's horns, a clear reference to the *horned god* of Paganism (like the Pashupati on one of the Indus seals). The positive imagery of Paganism got integrated into Christian imagery, but then as the symbol of evil. Now that we are no longer bound by the compulsions of the missionary project, we may clear the horned god, as well as the swastika, of the evil aura with which outsiders have covered them.

For Hindus who have migrated to the West, especially the U.S., there is a practical problem : if they display the swastika on the gates of mandirs, or

other places, outsiders think that this is some Nazi outfit. Worse, people who have personally suffered under the Nazi regime, may feel painfully reminded. I think it is a matter of sensitivity to display those swastikas only in very modest ways, for as long as people who have lived through the horrors of the Nazi regime are with us. Meanwhile, the Hindus abroad should educate the public about the real meaning and hoary tradition of this symbol, so that some time in the next century the Swastika may regain its rightful place as a profound and timeless symbol, untainted by the accidental and misconceived association with Nazism.

With all this talk about the misuse of the swastika, it may be useful to briefly restate its basic meaning. The word comes from *su-asti*, *it be good*, as in the Sanskrit greeting *Pratah swasti*, *good morning*. So, swastika means *auspicious-maker* or *sign of auspiciousness*. What the swastika visually depicts, is the solar cycle, be it during the day or during the year. It shows the circular movement at the four cardinal points : sunrise, noon, sunset, midnight ; or spring equinox, summer solstice, autumn equinox, winter solstice. As such, it is a shorthand for the Zodiac as well as for all macrocosmic and microcosmic cycles. It signifies the completeness as well as the dynamics of the Whole. Being primarily a solar symbol, it is normally (except in black-and-white print) painted in solar colours like red, saffron or gold ; while the Nazi swastika was black.

Like the swastika, the term *Arya*, which is rather central in Hindu tradition and more so in Nazism, is in need of rehabilitation. Of course, the term does not indicate a race, but a quality of character.²⁵⁰ When Buddha gives a short formulation of his teachings, he calls it the *Arya Satyani*, the four *Noble Truths*.²⁵¹ If the secularists have been inhibited about the use of the word *Arya* as proving the *Fascist* character of Hinduism, it is partly because of this terminology used by Buddha, the hero of their mythical anti-Brahmin revolution.

The term *Aryan* was used by the Nazis in opposition to the term *Semitic*. It so happens that both have

1. a primary linguistic meaning (the Indo-European and the Semitic language families),

2. a fallacious racial meaning (with Semitic standing for Jewish), and
3. a derivative theological meaning, derived from the language groups in which the main texts of two religion families have been written

the Hindu tradition in the largest sense, and the Jewish-Christian-Islamic tradition. The Nazis used the terms in the second meaning, vaguely basing it *scientifically* on the first meaning. For the third meaning, they didn't have the brains not the philosophical inclination to go into it.

Aryan and Semitic are shorthand for two radically differing approaches to religion. With "Semitic" are meant the religions claiming revelation from the one and only God. In primitive Shamanistic cults, there may be spirits speaking through the Shaman, but that is never a unique and definitive revelation from a unique Creator- god. Similarly, there were oracles where a god was supposed to speak through a human medium ; the point is that there were many of them. But the revealed monotheistic religions carry with them a typical fundamental doctrine that sets them apart from all other religions.

On the one hand, their God speaks to people at a specific moment in history, at a specific place, so that the beneficiaries or immediate witnesses are limited in number, certainly less than all of humanity. On the other hand, their God is the only one, so that all the other people on earth either have to get other revelations from this one God, or they are not getting revelations at all, except false ones from false gods. While the first option was theoretically possible, the *Semitic* religions have effectively chosen the second. This implies that humanity gets divided into two : those whom God has personally addressed, and those whom he has ignored. So, we get Jews and Gentiles, Christians and Pagans, Muslims and Kafirs.

Of course, every tribe used to divide the world into the tribe and the rest. The tribe was home, the rest was unsafe and foreign. And every group identity, tribal or other, can give rise to hostility against other groups. As an application of this general rule, even religious group identity could be the basis of polarization and conflict. However, the polarization between the One God's Chosen Community and the rest of humanity was of a radically different nature than these ordinary group antagonisms.

The tribal division was a division between people on an equal footing. The others had their own identity and interests, with which our own might sometimes be incompatible, but there was nothing intrinsically evil or wrong about them. We had gods, and so had they. Both of us worshipped the sun god, or the goddess of fleeting time who devours us all, or the Unknown god, with local accents and variations, but not radically different. For instance, in Homer's epic about the Trojan war, you see some of the gods *side* with the Greeks and other gods *side* with the Trojans. They shared the divine sphere between them.

This basic equality is broken in the *Semitic* religions. There, one part of humanity has God on its side. That implies that whoever stands against it, stands against God, with no divine friends on his own side. There is now a fortunate part of humanity, and another part which is doomed and cursed. Religion in its public aspect used to be a unifying thing, a celebration of a cosmic oneness transcending the biological social and other differences between the realms of nature and the members of a society. Now it became a divisive thing, pitting the Chosen against the doomed.

In this psychology, it is quite normal that all the non-human layers of the cosmos, who, just like the doomed part of humanity, were ignorant of God's unique revelation, were all deprived of their sacredness. The golden calf and other idols of the Gentiles were smashed. The sacred trees of the Pagans were felled. The holy cows of the Kafirs were slaughtered. And all this cosmos was given to Adam and Eve for their pleasure. Henceforth, a tree was nothing but timber

Thus, the Semitic religions constitute a radical break with natural religiosity, which had always made nature share in the manifestation of the divine, and which had never thought of limiting the awareness of the divine to one community.

In books written in a monotheistic cultural milieu, this *revealed* monotheism is always portrayed as a great step forwards in the march of humanity. However, in real terms I cannot see one genuine advantage that has accrued to humanity thanks to the revelation-based monotheism. It is said that this monotheism meant the end of superstition, of people praying to godlings for favours. But people have prayed to this new. One God for

the same favours. Worse, is there a bigger superstition than the belief that you are specially favoured over the other part of humanity, and that God is on your side ?

By contrast, the *Aryan* religious tradition has not pretended to be the special recipient of a unique divine revelation. The divine is manifest everywhere, be it in different ways and to different degrees. It is not excluded that some elements/times/places/animals/people are more sacred than others, but the difference is only gradual. There is a divine oneness of all entities in the cosmos. If at all you want to give this outlook a philosophical name, you could say that roughly, it is monism. That means, the assumption or perception that somehow everything is of one essence.

This Aryan tradition has found its classic formulation in the Sanskrit writings of entire lineages of human beings, referred to as Rishis. However, it is also present in Pagan traditions outside the area where Sanskrit was the language of culture. There are outward differences but a fundamental akinness with Pagan traditions the world over. If you analyze Pagan practices of ritual, sacrifice, incantation, you find the same presupposed attitude towards the cosmos : a basic awareness that it is one.

This basic awareness will be present in the religious feeling of many a member of the *Semitic* religions. But there, it is overlaid with the doctrinal assumption of a fundamental and irreducible two-ness of the cosmos : on the one hand God and His chosen ones, on the other hand the godless remainder. The degree to which individuals feel bound by their formal allegiance to this doctrine, may differ widely. And we will not judge the individuals. But we may give an opinion on the doctrine of the One God who reveals Himself to/through a specific individual, has brought an absolute division of mankind in the minds of its adherents, and this mental division has in turn caused untold suffering in persecutions and holy wars.

So, I cannot honestly compare the *Aryan* and the *Semitic* approach, and neutrally say that they are merely different. There is an inequality between the two. I think the *Aryan* approach is fundamentally more wholesome than the *Semitic* approach.

Because of this inequality, I think it is important to choose other terms for these basic doctrinal categories, than *Aryan* and *Semitic*. For, these terms also denote people. They may not denote races, as Hitler thought, but they do denote language groups, and people identify to quite an extent with their language. Moreover, these two types of religious outlook do not historically coincide with the said language groups.

The Bible was written in Hebrew and the Quran in Arabic, while Jesus spoke in Aramaic (though his words were preserved in Greek translation), all three Semitic languages. Nevertheless, there was a lot of Paganism in this language area before revelation-based monotheism took over. It is often forgotten that the Arabs whom Mohammed tried to convert, were just as much *polytheists* as the Hindus, and that they fought equally hard to preserve their Kaaba as the Hindus fought to repeat that the Jewish tradition lost the aggressive edge, which form the most reprehensible effect of the *Semitic* outlook, long ago.

Conversely, in Aryan Iran, under the Sassanian dynasty, we see the *Aryan* religion of Zoroaster take on an equally exclusivistic attitude as is typical for the *Semitic* religions, complete with temple-destruction, idol-breaking and persecution of Manichaeans and Buddhists. Later, many Aryan-speaking people have been converted to the *Semitic* creed of Islam. In Europe, most followers of the *Semitic* religion of Christ, are speakers of *Aryan* languages. In Africa and other places, the division in Aryan and Semitic has no linguistic (much less a racial) relevance.

So, I propose to renounce the habit of using *Semitic* as shorthand for "*revelation-based monotheistic*" religions. The use of the word *Arya* as shorthand for Sanatana Dharma can continue, but one should be careful not to give secularist slanderers a chance of falsely associating it with the *Aryan race* nonsense.

But before renouncing the *Semitic* habit myself, I will use the term *Semitic* one last time, in order to show how Nazism itself, for all its anti-Semitic rhetoric, very much fitted into the *Semitic* tradition.

As Girilal Jain has convincingly argued, Nazism was an extreme realization of the 19th century secular nationalism in Europe. This secular

nationalism was in its general attitude towards mankind a direct heir to the *Semitic* legacy carried into Europe by Christianity. There is a straight lineage from Moses' *Chosen People* to Hitler's *Herrenvolk* (superior people). The radical division of mankind into the chosen insiders and the lost outsiders is very much present in this secular nationalism.

A not-so-secular slogan of the impeccably secular Nazi state, written on the belt of the German soldiers, was : Gott mit uns (God with us). This notion can be traced straight to Moses, from whom it had made a second lineage to Mohammed's jihad.

Because of Hitler's dislike for Christianity, and because of some Nazi intellectuals' rhetoric involving the pre-Christian German mythology, many people, especially Christians, have considered Nazism as a return to Paganism.²⁵² That is a case of being fooled by a superficial semblance. In the Nazi ideology, the Germanic mythology had no place whatsoever. There was a certain flirting with themes from Germanic mythology since the mid-19th century at the latest, the best-known being Richard Wagner's operas (as there had been an exploration of Greek mythology since the Renaissance). So, by the time of Nazism, there were some artsy upper class people and some weird intellectuals playing with this ancient Germanic imagery, but there is no trace of any ideological influence from those fairytales on the actual political thought of the Nazis.

Incidentally, today there is a new revival of Pagan religion in Europe. In Britain we have had the New Druids, both formal groups who claim to revive the ancient Celtic traditions, and individuals who explore whatever lore has survived, combining it with astrology, Oriental mysticism, and more such ingredients. This movement started in the romantic 19th century, in the same climate in which Wagner wrote his *Ring der Nibelungen* and *Lohengrin*, and it has continued with ups and downs till today. In Germany too, there is now a rediscovery of pre-Christian Germanic religion. Apart from the fact that these New heathens have to reconstruct this lost tradition from stray fragments and outsiders' testimonies, they also face the problem of this association of ancient Germanic lore with Nazism. But they manage to convince themselves and others of the utter superficiality in the Nazis' appropriation of this ancient imagery, and of the inherent tolerant and open-

minded attitude of the Pagan civilization. In today's Germany, an estimated 20,000 people regularly participate in gatherings where the ancient or neo-ancient rites are conducted, most of them intellectuals with decent jobs.

If we look at the basic points in the Nazi programme, we do not find anything there that can be traced to Germanic Paganism. Anti-Semitism (i.e. anti-Judaism) has nothing whatsoever to do with Germanic Paganism, it is a strong Christian tradition. Especially the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church in Hitler's Austria gave it implicit or explicit ideological support. Authoritarian political thought has nothing whatsoever to do with the Germanic tribal organization, which was largely democratic, with an elected king and a regular all-tribe assembly meeting. It had more to do with the secular organization of the Roman empire (which model had loomed large over the European polity all through the Christian period), which has also influenced the Church organization. The same Roman influence we find in outward forms like the uniformist discipline, the Roman salute and the fondness of grand parades. Secular nationalism, glorification of the state, genocide, racial purity and uniformity, all these essential ideological elements of Nazism have nothing whatsoever to do with the Pagan religion. Neither the Germanic Paganism, nor the Hindu Paganism with its swastika.

It is important to stress this profound foreignness of Nazism to pre-modern Paganism, because once Hindus set out to rediscover the social philosophy and other elements of their own traditions, there will of course be some secularist ignoramus who will say that "*this is just what Hitler did*".

The Nazi kind of nationalism was also of the *Semitic* kind. Rather than seeing the nation as one step on the ladder in the organizational hierarchy, below civilization and humanity, and above regional, tribal and family units, it denied this gradedness. Instead, it divided the world in outsiders and insiders, thus in principle opposing itself to the rest of the world, and imposed uniformity on the nation, discouraging all subnational groupings. Again, this exclusivistic and uniformist nationalism is opposed to the Pagan outlook.

The dominance of monotheism has strongly promoted that single most essential trait of the monotheistic mind : simplistic crudeness. For a well-known example, monotheists are idol-breakers : they are for God's unity, therefore they are against diversity. Their mental culture is too crude to see that multiplicity does not exclude unity, even while polytheists know fully well that there is one divine essence in all their gods (who anyway are all projections of the one but multi-faceted human consciousness). Most modernizers these days are appallingly limited to black-and white categories in their thinking. For instance, in the present discussion of multi-level integration, they are of course for slogans like unity and integration, and therefore they are against any *narrow* and *chauvinistic* championing of region, sect, language group etc. Their only concept of unity is to raze everything flat, then there will be no more difference and disunity, so that will be the realization of unity, equality etc. This is Hitler's and Stalin's approach to national integration.

Yet, real modern scientific thinking is gradual. It handles in-between categories (such as probability between certainty and uncertainty). This is formally a rediscovery of the old Pagan world-view. There is not just the absolute one God and the absolutely profane plural world, as in monotheism. There is a lot of life between the two. There is both sacredness and profaneness within the world, as there is both oneness and plurality within the divine. Similarly, there are in-between levels between the individual and the state, with units who entertain a certain specificity rather than submitting to uniformity.

A typically simplistic fallacy of the monotheistic mind is the one heard so often in the anti-Mandir rhetoric : "*But Ram is everywhere ! Ram would be ashamed if he saw how attached you people are to something as profane as a spatial location and a structure of bricks !*" Of course God is everywhere. And yet, there is a sanatana, ineluctable tendency in man to make the sacred present within the world, by consecrating certain parts of space and time, and demarcating them from the profane parts. We like to create difference, and make some places and some times special. Even the monotheists have had to yield to this natural tendency. Even though Allah is not in any place and time in particular, the Muslims have places of pilgrimage, festival days, a special day for prayer (Friday), a special month

for fasting (Ramzan). The uniformizing monotheists can't help recognizing certain more sacred parts in space and time. So it is quite alright for Hindus to say : no, not any place will do, we want the one site that we have considered sacred since centuries. Sacred means : not just any.

This *Semitic* simplistic crudeness, the same which prevents secularists from properly understanding the Ayodhya issue, is present in many modern unhealthy forms of nationalism, among them Nazism. They see their nation in isolation, as an absolutely independent unit, which on the other hand excludes all subdivisions within the nation. In a healthy international set-up, there are grades of independence, which are proportional to the grades of *separate identity* between ethnic and linguistic units.

A case in point is "Khalistan". The Sikh community is distinct by its dress, and by its specific choice of Hindu scriptures and parampara. It is not distinct by language, for Panjabi (if at all it can be considered a language rather than a Hindi dialect) is also spoken by Hindus and Muslims ; and its scriptures are in Hindi, the language of crores of non-Sikh Hindus. It is not distinct geographically, for it has always lived mixed with other communities. It does not have a separate political history, for Ranjit Singh's empire was a state ruled by a Sikh, but by no means a Sikh state in which Sikhdom was shared by all or even the majority of the citizens. So, by the United Nations criteria for recognition as a separate nation, the Sikhs don't qualify at all. To the extent of the distinctness of their identity, they are entitled to, well, cultivating the things that make up their identity, but not to a separate state.

There has been a gradual increase of *Semitic* influence on the Sikh community during this century, or rather, on the Akalis who have set themselves up as the leaders. They have exchanged the Hindu concept of God's oneness, through many forms, for the Semitic concept of God's unicity, inimical to all personified depictions or *goods*. They have reshaped their gurus into *prophets*, intercessory mouthpieces of God, with guru Govind Singh as the "*last and final prophet*". These *prophets* have *revealed* the words that make up Sikh *Scripture*, and made the Sikhs into a "*people of the Book*". The chief influence is of course that of Islam, but the general

depreciation for *polytheism* and idolatry which the British brought, has also played a role.

It is no wonder that with this artificial *Semitic* identity, some Sikhs have developed a *Semitic* concept of nationalism, not admitting of any gradations. They began applying the crass simplistic reasoning of absolutizing their small measure of distinctness into a separate nationhood, and denying their internal differences and sub-identities for the sake of uniformity. They have a separate dress, therefore they have a separate identity, therefore they are entitled to an independent state. On the other hand, within their own community, they accept no differences and impose the Khalsa Sikh identity on the otherwise pluriform Nanakpanthi community : any Sikh who is not a Khalsa Sikh is not a real Sikh. Absolute cleavage with other communities and uniformity within the community, these are the essential ingredients of *modern* nationalism, generated in the *Semitic* cultural context of late- Christian Europe.

For the sake of national integration in India, it is imperative to set the record straight, to reverse this process of absolutizing any minor difference in *identity* into a separatist claim to a *nation-state*. In the specific case of the Sikhs, the obvious fact should be made clear, that Sikh identity is integrated in a hierarchy of differentiation within Hinduism : it is a Bhakti sect within the broad Vaishnava tradition within Sanatana Dharma.

In general, a theory of graded integration of distinct communities via a hierarchy of political levels that does justice to this distinctness should be evolved. That is the *Aryan* answer to a world-wide problem of plural-identity states, which has been aggravated by the *Semitic* absolutist approach.

14.4. "They killed the Mahatma"

*"It is extremely symbolic that Advani is the heir of Nathuram Godse who, in pursuit of what he was convinced was his duty to India, shot dead the man who had chanted the name of Ram all his life till his last breath", writes M.J. Akbar.*²⁵³ Many others make the same allegation, mostly more sharply.

Before going into the facts of the matter, let us make the observation that today the name and especially the murder of the Mahatma are being exploited to the fullest by people who are crusading against that which was Mahatma Gandhi's first concern and loyalty : Hindu society. As is clear from the Mahatma's polemic against the Christian missionaries, he was first and foremost a Hindu, who opposed all designs to destroy Hindu culture.²⁵⁴ And it was because he loved and served Hindu society, that he could take the freedom to criticize it. Those who criticize Hindu society and its defenders today, not as its well-wishers but as its enemies, and who do not hesitate to invoke the Mahatma's authority to prop up their Hindu-baiting designs before a population with an increasingly hazy memory of the Mahatma's real commitment, are traitors to the Mahatma's message. These people, from the shameless Jawaharlal Nehru down to his sycophants like M.J. Akbar, are in no position to lecture Advani about Gandhi the Ram bhakt.

Now, let us get the facts straight. In 1948, Nathuram Godse was an active member of the Hindu Mahasabha. Many workers and leaders of this organization were also members of the Congress, the party which Akbar in his article seeks to portray as the absolute antipode of the *communal forces*. Since 1925 there existed another Hindu organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, which did not intend to be political. Godse, who was a Maharashtra Brahmin just like the founders of the RSS, had left this organization some time before he killed Gandhi, because he didn't find it radical enough.

In 1947, the Mahatma's decades-long attempts to forge Hindu-Muslim unity ended in utter failure, when the Muslim League, supported by an overwhelming majority of the Muslim electorate, forced Partition on India. It should be a lesson for those who talk lightly of national integration and Hindu-Muslim unity, that even the Mahatma couldn't influence the Muslim community leadership. In the perception of millions of Hindus, especially those who had to flee their homes in what had suddenly become Pakistan, this Partition was very much the Mahatma's personal failure and responsibility : he had carried on a policy of concessions to the Muslims in order to appease their ever-increasing demands, and they had only become more arrogant in the process.

As if to confirm their views, he went on a fast to death in order to force the Hindus and the Indian government into a number of concessions. Among them: the Hindu refugees who were staying in mosques in Delhi had to vacate them and find a place elsewhere, and the Indian government had to pay Pakistan's share of the treasury which the British had left, to Pakistan, a country with which it was actually at war in Kashmir. All his demands were met, and he stopped his fast.

This one-sided string of demands on the Hindus, and this masochistic habit of instilling guilt into his own community and swallowing all the Muslim crimes without protest, immensely angered many Hindus, among them Nathuram Godse. He *couldn't take it any longer*, for him the very name of the Mahatma *made my blood boil*. So, with the complicity of a few friends, he murdered the Mahatma.

The Indian people, which was so angry with the Mahatma the day before, now re-installed him as the living saint they used to venerate, and as he was now dead, they made a myth out of him. A myth that contained the beliefs which the day before had been seen by everyone to lie shattered by reality.

Conversely, there was a lot of violence against the Hindu Mahasabha. There was also large-scale violence against the Maharashtra Brahmin community to which Godse belonged, much like the anti-Sikh violence after Indira's murder (in both cases M.J. Akbar's Congress is generally believed to have actively fomented this violence).

The great beneficiary of the Mahatma's murder was undoubtedly Jawaharlal Nehru. It marginalized the Hindu Mahasabha, and whatever other Hindu activist party existed, completely. Without the murder, Nehru and his Congress would have had to answer for the betrayal of the election promise that India would remain united, and for the immense suffering to which they were a party by accepting Partition. Now, he had an occasion to ban and possibly destroy what he hated most of all: the organizations which championed Hindutva.

In this case, the fact that Nehru benefited immensely by the Mahatma's murder, will not lead us to the conclusion that he must have been behind it.²⁵⁵ For, the principle that he who benefits must have committed the crime,

only applies if people act rationally. Now, Nathuram Godse's act was anything but rational. Not only did he do the biggest possible damage to his own political cause. He also did not even punish the source of the Partition disaster that had angered him so much. If he had killed Jinnah, it would still have been murder, but it would somehow have been logical. But killing the Mahatma was like being beaten up by street toughs and then coming home and killing your father in revenge. It was quite irrational.

It is therefore quite improbable that the Hindu Mahasabha as such had a hand in the murder. In fact, Godse had been angry with party leader Savarkar for being too co- operative with the new Indian government. At any rate, the party leadership was not involved in the murder : that was the judge's opinion, when he fully acquitted Savarkar, whom the prosecutor for the state, at the express instigation of Nehru, had also accused of complicity in the murder. The party leader's non- involvement was so clear, that the prosecutor did not appeal against the acquittal.

As is well known, Godse and his accomplice Narayan Apte were hanged, and several others were sentenced to life imprisonment, of which they actually did some fifteen years.^{[256](#)}

Now, what does L.K. Advani have to do with all this ? He has been a member of the RSS since decades. His party, the BJP, or at least its earlier incarnation, the Jan Sangh, was formed by RSS members who wanted to give a political dimension to the movement, in 1951. So, his party did not exist at the time of the Mahatma's murder, but the mother organization RSS was very much around (in fact, RSS chief Guru Golwalkar was one of the first to condemn the murder as a *heinous crime*, but that condemnation was of course so common that it couldn't prove much). So the question becomes: is the RSS anyhow "*the heir of Nathuram Godse*", as M. J. Akbar wants us to believe ?

After the murder, Nehru, who saw his chance, banned not only the Hindu Mahasabha but also the RSS, and jailed many RSS workers. However, the prosecutor could not find any trace of complicity, and did not prosecute any RSS man. So, in a juridical sense, the RSS had nothing at all to do with the murder. And M.J. Akbar and similar propagandists have to exploit people's

ignorance in order to pass off their association of L.K. Advani with Nathuram Godse.

Now, one could say that the RSS was co-responsible for the murder in the vaguer sense that they created the atmosphere for it (the same way secularists today allot guilt for the riots). And it is undoubtedly true that the RSS was against Partition and therefore against the Partition managers, including the Mahatma. He had done so many fasts unto death to force Hindus, why had he not done one to stop the Muslims from partitioning the country ? This question lived in the minds of many Indians, and probably the RSS was vocal in expressing this anger against the Mahatma's passivity in the face of Partition. There is no doubt that they did their part in strengthening the anti-Gandhi mood in the country. But they did not create the atmosphere for Godse's act : Godse knew them since years and he was through with them. Godse didn't need the RSS (on which he looked down as being merely a culture organisation) to make up his mind about Gandhi and about how to *punish* him.

There is quite a difference between demolishing the Mahatma's myth (a myth which M.J.Akbar's Congress Party continues to exploit even today) or criticizing his policies, and killing the man. The anti-Mahatma things which the RSS people said and wrote, were to my knowledge not more vicious than the anti-Advani propaganda which the secularists spread today (being a bigot, vicious, rabid, fascist, another Barbar, Jinnah, Hitler, etc.) And if tomorrow a lunatic kills Advani, we will not accuse the secularists of committing or even inspiring the murder. They may be proven liars, but that does not make them murderers.

14.5. Hindu nationalism

"The Hindu communalists' claim to being patriotic is wholly suspect. The RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha have a shameful history of collaboration with the British, especially in 1942. Their support to the colonial state, unlike the communists', did not even have that redeeming feature or fig leaf : the choice of a lesser evil against fascism. It came from utterly despicable, base and crass motives." Thus spake praful Bidwai.^{[257](#)}

Praful Bidwai repeats here a classic from the communist gallery of lies : that the communists collaborated with the British as a matter of choosing the lesser evil and first fighting fascism. It is simply not true that the communists joined hands with the British because they wanted to fight fascism. When England formally, declared war on Nazi Germany in 1939, the communists didn't move. Stalin had a pact with Hitler, and so the communists did not fight Hitler. It was only when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, that the communists joined the anti- fascist struggle. The communists' loyalty was not to India, not to Britain, not to the cause of anti-fascism, but solely to the Soviet Union. The only *redeeming feature* in the communists' collaboration with the British, was that it was part of their collaboration with the Soviet Union.

Praful Bidwai writes an articles against communalism and accuses communalists of "*utterly despicable, crass and base motives*" for their collaboration with the British. So that must be his judgment about the Muslim League, which always consistently collaborated with the British, and which was wholly unconcerned with fig-leaves like the anti-fascist struggle. We may add that Bidwai's communist friends supported the Muslim League's Pakistan demand, and that they spied for the British and got many freedom fighters jailed.

The Hindu Mahasabha had always been in the anti-colonial struggle. Its leader Savarkar had spent many years in a penal camp on the Andamans for complicity in anti- colonial murder. We may disagree with what he said, but as titles go, he had deserved his title Swatantryaveer (hero of independence). When he wanted Hindus to join the British army during the war ("*Hinduize all politics, militarize Hindudom*"), this was not a betrayal of the freedom struggle, but rather a potentially very effective strategy for obtaining quick independence. Savarkar's calculation was that after the war, the British would find before them a Hindu army, well-trained in the war against the Japanese, well-armed and well-organized, against which they would not even want to wage another colonial war.

Why does Bidwai mention 1942, and not, say, 1944? Because in 1944 all parties including Congress collaborated with the British, while 1942 was the year of the Quit India movement. This movement was no doubt

patriotic, but it was a great failure. It did nothing for independence, and it did not even achieve its real objective : bringing Congress back in the centre-stage of Indian politics. But at the same time, Subhash Chandra Bose was joining the Axis powers and organizing the Indian National Army to invade and liberate British India. Now, let's see who collaborated with the British against his own people. Jawaharlal Nehru declared that when Subhash Chandra Bose would set foot on Indian soil, he would fight him. That is, Nehru would collaborate with the British against the Japanese-backed Indian National Army. Taking our cue from Praful Bidwai, we must ascribe to Nehru "*utterly despicable, crass and base motives*".

Anyway, what a strange exercise : dealing with the allegation that the Hindu activist parties are not India nationalists. I had thought that at least would be granted to them. It just goes to show how *rabid* (to use one of their favourite terms) the secularists' hatred for the Hindu communalists has become : they just kick around whichever way they can, now reverting to the more familiar allegation of national revanchism, irredentism (reclaiming territory on historical grounds) and narrow chauvinism.

Let us consider these more familiar allegations, which would be an element in common with the aggressive nationalism of Germany, Japan and Italy in the thirties (and with that of China in 1950-62). Take irredentism : designs to annex territory based on historical claims. In some RSS publications, you see maps of Akhand Bharat, which are roughly British India : including Myanmar (Burma), but not including Afghanistan. So, it might seem they somewhere have a design to annex Myanmar one day. In fact, Myanmar was never a part of India, it was only the British who lumped the two together for a while.

On the other hand, Afghanistan was a full part of the Hindu cradle up till the year 1000, and in political unity with India until Nadir Shah separated it in the 18th century. The mountain range in Eastern Afghanistan where the native Hindus were slaughtered, is still called the Hindu Kush (Persian : *Hindu slaughter*.) It is significant that one of the very few place-names on earth that reminds us not of the victory of the winners but rather of the slaughter of the losers, concerns a genocide of Hindus by the Muslims.

It seems that many people who champion the Hindu cause, do not have a good knowledge of Hindu history. But others do at least know of Afghanistan's having been a part of Hindu culture, for I have heard once, as an illustration of the *expansionist ambitions* of the *Hindu communalists*, that they want the *shuddhi of Afghanistan*. It was quoted by a secularist, with the suggestion : isn't that irredentist, and therefore fascist?

Well, no. As long as *shuddhi* means the Hindu variety of conversion, there is nothing wrong with organizations like the Arya Samaj going to Afghanistan and performing shuddhi of the Afghans, that is, ritually leading them back into the Hindu fold. Of course, one doesn't see it happen just like that. But then, one doesn't see it happen after military conquest either. No cases are known to me of forced shuddhi, even in the heady twenties when Shuddhi and Tabligh movements competed for converts. Shuddhi can only come after a conscious and free decision of the human being involved. On that condition, there is nothing wrong with the Shuddhi of Afghanistan.

There are also, no doubt, some cranks who think that all countries with some Indian influence have to be brought together in a Greater India : Iran, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia. But since some of the same cranks also believe that everything comes from India (my native tongue, Dutch, is said to have been brought by the Daityas), this Greater India would really comprise the whole world. Yeah, why not the whole world one big Hindu Rashtra? The thing is that such people, while politically totally unimportant, are somehow visible enough within the Hindutva movement, to give the whole movement a bad name.

The one questionable and even objectionable element in the nationalism of Hindutva prophets like Savarkar and Golwalkar, as well as of Jawaharlal Nehru for that matter, is this 19th century European concept of a territorial nationalism. Savarkar defined a Hindu as someone for whom India is both his fatherland and holyland²⁵⁸. The two words are important in the definition : a Chinese Buddhist may consider India his holyland, but since he is not an Indian native, he is not a Hindu; and an Indian Muslim, conversely, is not a Hindu because his holyland lies in Arabia.

Now, why tie the definition of Hindu to this piece of land? The Hindus in Bali, Guyana etc. are just as much Hindus as those in Bharat. One can

migrate and yet retain Hindu culture. Of course, the name Hindu is really a geographical term (Hind is Persian for Sindh), but then the task for Hindu thinkers should be to free Hinduism from this territorial definition, rather than to confirm it.

It is said that Shintoism is Japan's *national religion* (as opposed to so-called *universal* or imperialist religion). Alright, but Shinto does not mean *Japan*, it means *the way of the gods*. So, if you define a religion, you should say something about its contents, not just about its geographical location. "*The way of the gods*" may be still very rudimentary as a definition, but it says at least that it is a method or practice (a way) involving the divine in a kind of personalized way (the gods, as opposed to an atheist or nirguna system). That is more than *Hindu*, which means just *of India*.

Savarkar put things upside down. He was a nationalist, pledging allegiance to this piece of earth now called India. But what is special about this country, so special that Savarkar builds a religion on it? There is nothing special about this country, except that historically it happens to be the cradle of Hindu society, and that society in turn derives its worth from its practicing and embodying a certain culture, Sanatana Dharma. It is because of Sanatana Dharma that this society is worth serving and preserving, and in turn it is because of *Hindu* society that *Hindusthan* is worth loving and defending. But this culture can be transplanted or re-created elsewhere, and then that other country is as much fatherland and holyland.

This territorial nationalism centered on Bharat Mata only confuses the issues before Hindu society. For instance, it occasions all this silly talk about Muslim Indians cheering for Pakistan in cricket games, and having extra-territorial loyalties to the area from which their religion was imported. But so what? The problem with Islam is not at all that it is foreign. The problem with Islam lies not in its geographical but in its ideological origins. The problem is not one of nationalism vs. extra-national loyalties, it is one of culture and ideology : an exclusivist anti-humanist creed vs. a pluralist and integrally humanist culture. The Islamic problem is not one of loyalty to Pakistan or Mecca, but one of self-righteousness and intolerance.

As long as the *Hindu nationalists* continue to define the Muslim problem as a problem of nationality, of "*joining the national mainstream*" and of "*being Indian first and Muslim next*", they are trapped in 19th century state nationalism, with all its puffed-up patriotic emotionalism. They are evading the confrontation between two incompatible ideologies/cultures, which no patriotism or loyalty to the state can unit. For instance, asking the Muslims to identify themselves as *Mohammedi Hindus* is not only very unrealistic, it constitutes a refusal to recognize the true (exclusivist and therefore averse to assimilation) character of Islam, in the name of a superficial *Hindu nationhood*.

There is no good reason why Muslims or anyone else should direct his first loyalty to the Indian state. That state is nothing but an instrument to regular society and facilitate the citizens' fulfillment of their own life aims. If Muslims want to direct their loyalty towards an international religious community, they are free to do so, as long as they abide by the law of the land. The way forwards for the Hindu movement, is to redefine the problem in terms of ideology and civilization, and to address the challenge of Islam not at the level of ineffective emotional categories like *loyalty* and *identifying with the nation*, but at the ideological level. And when it comes to loyalty, this should not be directed towards such accidental matters as a territory or a nation in which we happen to be born, but towards the eternal values embodied in Hindu civilization.

Hindutva ideologue V.D.Savarkar was a territorial Hindu, but culturally he was quite alienated. The well-known example: he advocated meat-eating and even meet-eating. Savarkar reasoned: if beef is more nutritious, then drop all the taboos, and kill cows for their meat. If seems many of his (formal and informal) followers still think that the Hindus can only defeat the meat-eating Muslims if they give up vegetarianism. What nonsense this is: what are you fighting for if you believe that "*in order to better defend Hindu culture, I have to give up Hindu culture*"? If you think you have to forsake your culture identity, you only have this territorial identity left.

And then, paradoxically, you arrive at the same point where the Nehruvian secularists are. They too advocate a culturally neutral, territorial patriotism. Both in the Hindu movements and in the anti-Hindu secularist

movements, people are saying that you should be *Indian first*. What is this, being *India*? What is that, *Bharatiyatva*? Human beings are not different by the land they inhabit. They develop a certain distinctiveness by the value-system they practice, by the social ways that mould them, by the mental outlook that is instilled in them. So you can have a commitment to certain values. But a commitment to a certain piece of earth can only be superficial. And if this basically superficial attachment to this territory gets mystified, as happened with the secular nationalisms in some European countries, then the consequences are evil.

Of course, when there is a football game, I want the team from my town to win. If it's an international game, I want my country's team to win. It would be a bit ridiculous to support the other town, the foreign country. So, that much territorial patriotism is alright. But one's basic commitment should be to more substantial things than that. A country can only acquire a value, and be an object of commitment, if it becomes historically linked with a substantial value. As long as India is conceived as culturally neutral, it is just a piece of land, not really worth any commitment. Forget about *Bharatiyatva*. The day when the world has one global culture, and that day is not too far off, these concept of territorial patriotism, of Indian-ness or American-ness etc. will only apply in football stadiums.

However, today the Indian state has an important function as the abode and defense of a culture which could hardly thrive otherwise. Since Hindu society is surrounded by Islamic and Communist enemies out to destroy Hindu culture, this state acquires a more than territorial importance. India is not culturally neutral, because objectively it is the only defense of Hindu culture against its enemies. So, as abode and defense of Hindu culture, this land and this state can count on the Hindus' allegiance and attachment. At this secondary level, nationalism becomes meaningful.

That Savarkar, one of the foremost Hindutva leaders, could be so careless about Hindu culture even while defending it, is significant for the advanced state of self-forgetfulness that threatens to submerge Hindu society. And in this nationalistic and directed to Bharat Mata, than cultural and directed to Sanatana Dharma.

If at all the nationalism in the Hindutva movement would develop fascist overtones (and I do not see that at present), it would be due to its not being Hindu enough, and being too secular-nationalist. Compare with the relative unimportance of national borders in medieval Europe when it was all Catholic and unconcerned with nation-states. It was the larger religious and cultural idea (the Brahmin level) that could keep in its place the political idea of the state (the Kshatriya level). Similarly, a deeper knowledge and understanding of Sanatana Dharma would soon dedramatize and ultimately dissolve the problems of regionalism and sectarianism.

For instance, Sikh separatism is based on externalities like beards and turbans, and on a defective and distorted understanding of Hindu and Sikh doctrine. If today Hindu politicians have to advocate a tough line in Punjab, and sending in the army, it is because they themselves (as well as all the traveling sadhus and other consciousness-raisers of Hindu society) failed to check the spread of ignorance and misconceptions about the Sikh tradition.

Saying that India only makes sense as the eggshell in which Hindu society lives, and that India takes its identity from Hinduism, may not be the position taken by Savarkar, who put this the other way around, but at any rate it is the position considered *Hindu communalist* par excellence by the secularists. Yet, the position is wholly correct. But for Hinduism, there would not have been an Indian Union. Suppose that, as some foresaw a century ago, all Hindus would have been converted to Islam or Christianity. What would happen then, can be seen from such happy Muslim-Christian bhai-bhai countries like Lebanon, Cyprus, Sudan, Kosovo (Yugoslavia), Nagorny-Karabakh. The country would have been split at the very least into a Muslim North and a Christian South. [259](#)

In the sense that Hinduism is the cultural reason for India's very existence, India cannot exist but as a Hindu Rashtra. Let us see what the secular alternative is.

In a secular India, there is room for different religions, right? This pluralism is either a negative pluralism : we don't care, be whatever you want to be. In that case, you have a neutral state. That is the official position today, and it is not generating much enthusiasm. The minorities don't want it, because they feel threatened by majority rule. They fear that a neutral

state regulated by majority vote, would uniformize at the expense of the weaker elements in the plural set-up. They allege that, against its own professing, the preserving of the minorities' identity is made an issue, and when the majority of the weak, an anti-democratic policy of championing the minorities against the majority is enforced. And so, everyone is unhappy.

The alternative to this neutral pluralism is a positive pluralism. Underlying it, there is philosophy that positively gives a full-blooded foundation and justification to plurality. That philosophy exist : it is called Sanatana Dharma, and a state founded on it could well be called a Hindu Rashtra. In this state, the different components of the plural set-up are recognized as such. This state would be different from a uniform democracy, in that it would recognize plural subsystems. This recognition of plurality is, once more, the very opposite of fascism.

Integrating different units of identity into a large identity, is one of the foremost socio-political problems of today. And it is an issue on which the Hindu tradition has interesting approaches to offer. Since it is such a vast and important issue, I will limit myself in the following chapter to the one aspect of it that is highlighted at present in this discussion : *minorityism* vs. *majoritarianism*.

14.6. Majorityism

The BJP has been saying that the government and some political parties indulge in *minorityism*. This means that they have promised or given special privileges to the minorities, chiefly the Muslims, in exchange for their political support. Two other reasons for this *pampering the minorities* may be " *the approval of the Muslim countries*, with whom Nehru and his successors established a special relationship (party made necessary by the Nehru-created Kashmir problem, on which a united Muslim front had to be prevented), and the satisfaction of a mental desire to be *secular*. In my opinion, the last factor, the mental cluster of *secularism*, the need to prove oneself non-Hindu and pro-minorities, is the most important one.

The examples of systematic institutional *minorityism* cited most often are the separate personal law based on the Shariat, the special status of the Muslim-majority state Jammu and Kashmir, the immunity of minority schools and places of worship from government interference or take-over. Examples of occasional political minorityism are the numerous unequal treaties before independence between Congress and the Muslim league, the creation of a Muslim-majority district in Kerala by redrawing of district borders, the overruling of the Shah Bano verdict with legislation, the creation of a *minorities commission* (under the Janata government of which some BJP leaders were Cabinet ministers). These do not add up to a full *oppression* of Hindu society by the Muslim minority, but they do constitute real discriminations.

Opposing this minorityism, the BJP has put forward the slogan : *Justice for all, appeasement of none*. This means that there should be no discrimination between individuals, between states, or between any intermediary levels of organization, on the basis of religions. Thus, instead of a *Minorities Commission*, there should be a *Human Rights Commission*, because members of the majority can have *grievances* too. Instead of immunity for minority schools, there should be immunity for schools run by any community. In fact, many members of the Constituent Assembly who voted this Article 30 giving guarantees to the minority educational institutions, acted on the assumption that majority institutions would wrong, the Article should be reconsidered. A common civil code should be enacted. Articles 370 should be scrapped and Kashmir should be fully integrated.

So, what the BJP demands here, is that the rules of democracy be applied without any exemptions or exceptions on communal grounds. To any democratic-minded person, this would seem quite unobjectionable. Not so to the Indian secularists.

Of late, they have coined a new term, which should brand this democratic equality as really a component of fascism: majoritarianism. The right term to oppose minorityism would have been majorityism, i.e. espousal of the majority cause, but they chose the uglier majoritarianism. This is too bad for them, because the term can be analyzed as "*espousal of the majoritarian cause*", so not championing a (majority) community, hence communalism,

but championing the majoritarian principle. And there is nothing objectionable in the majoritarian principle: it is the very working principle of our democracy.

In fact, the secularists are quite correct in not describing the opposition to minorityism as majorityism. Opposing the favouring of minorities need not indicate a favouring of the majority, it may just as well stem for a concern of the working principle of the current form of democracy, viz. decision by the majority.

"The true test of a democracy is the justice that the minority gets in the system. The majority will always get its share whatever the system", writes M.J. Akbar²⁶⁰.

With that, white minority rule in South Africa certainly passes *the true test of democracy*. M.J. Akbar implies that all struggle against minority regimes oppressing majorities was futile, since majorities cannot possibly be oppressed.

But Hindus point out that they are really discriminated against in the laws of the land, and that minorities do get privileges which are unthinkable in most genuinely secular states.

If we apply Bipan Chandra's definition of *communalism*, viz. attributing common secular interests to people on the ground of a common religion. then we must consider M.J. Akbar's statement as an application of communalist thought categories. There is absolutely no questioning of the religious rights of the minorities in India, so if Mr. Akbar raises issues involving the minorities, it must be non-religious issues, in which the category of religious community (*minority*) does not properly apply. >From the moment the religious rights of the minorities are guaranteed, any other talk of *minorities* is fundamentally communalist. Every single article of law not dealing with the exercise of religious community as a legally relevant unit of organization, is an element of communalism in the legal framework of the state, and should be repudiated in a truly secular-set-up.

A religious community is only a lawful category in strictly religious matters. In these, there is already discrimination against the Hindus. The

state governments can (and do, as recently in Kerala) take over the management of Hindu temples, not of minority places of worship. They can (and do, as in West Bengal) take over school started by Hindu organizations. Apart from the secular aspects of education, there is religious discrimination against the Hindus in that the imparting of Hindus tradition is hampered, as well as the creation of a Hindu atmosphere in a school (e.g. through the selective recruitment of teachers, to which the minority schools are fully entitled).

Both in the letter and spirit of the Constitution and in actual practice, Hindus as a religious community are discriminated against in matters of temples management and education. These discriminations are at least partly encroachments on the exercise n the exercise of the Hindus' constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom. Just imagine what rhetoric and agitation would be lunched if such discriminations had applied to the minorities.

Then there is the matter of the separate civil code for the minorities. Marriage and inheritance laws are, perhaps on top of some sacramental dimension, quite secular matters. Recognizing and institutionalizing inequality between the citizens of India in these secular matters on the basis of their religion is definitely a case of constitutional communalism. Or rather, let us not be too harsh on the Constitution itself, for it does call on the law-maker to eventually abolish the religion-based law systems. It is political communalism on the part of the parties that refuse to implement the constitutional provision for the eventual enactment of a common civil code.

It has been said, by commentators ranging from Girilal Jain to Mani Shankar Aiyar, that this common civil code should not be forced on the Muslims, that they should agree to it voluntarily, without any pressure being put on them to do so. As a matter of practical policy in the given situation, that makes good sense. However, as a matter of principle, the position that a common law decided on by a democratic majority, should not be imposed on an unwilling minority, opens the door for all kinds of minority veto rights that make a mockery of the democratic principle that decision are taken by majority vote. One can justify this position by saying that a

minority's personal law is not the whole country's business, so that the relevant majority whose choice should determine the democratic decision, is not the majority of the entire nation, but merely the emerging in the democratic process within the community.

This reasoning would form part of a philosophy of multi community integration, in which as many powers as possible are devolved to the lowest possible level, in this case the religious community (since personal law is associated with religious commandments). This philosophy is currently gaining in relevance in a world which, with its increasing global integration, is discovering the socio-political value of decentralization: while matters of global concern are to be decided at the global level, national decisions should be retained at the national level, which in turn should not usurp decisions that can be taken at the regional level, and this in turn should devolve to the local level decisions that can be taken at that level. This decentralization trend (which is visible, for instance, in the increasing recognition of the substate regions as political units in the European Community) is linked with the modern *small is beautiful* philosophy, applied to political decision-making.

Of course, this decentralization of power to the proper and lowest possible level, is akin to the decentralized structure of Hindu society, which always was commonwealth of (occupational as well as religious) communities. It is quite in the spirit of Hindu tradition, though not in the spirit of the Constitution, to leave the Muslim community its personal law.

The separate status for the state of Kashmir (Article 370) is again a discrimination in secular matters on the basis of religion, viz. its being a state with a Muslim majority. Nehru sycophants have tried to explain this irresponsible and communalist Article as follows: "*The special problems of Jammu and Kashmir do not arise only out of the fact of its being a Muslim-majority state. It is also a state coveted by a foreign power which has thrice gone to war with India to capture the state,... whose territory is partly under hostile foreign occupation,... which is geopolitically located in the cockpit of international intrigue.*"^{[261](#)}

In fact, each of these problems can be reduced to this one fact that it is a Muslim-majority state and is therefore claimed by Pakistan under the terms

of the Partition of British India. With a Hindu majority this would be radically different, and it would not even want the separate status granted by Article 370. Moreover, none of the said problems justifies a separate status. On the contrary, in most countries they would lead to an extra strong integration into the Union, if not permanent central rule

But our Nehruvian knows it all better: *"It is with a view to addressing ourselves to these very special problems... that the constitutional device of Article 370 was evolved."* If that is true, then we must recognize in all sincerity that this *device* has been ineffective. It has not stopped the Chinese from annexing parts of Karakoram and Ladakh, it has not stopped Pakistan from invading it twice more, it has not prevented the ongoing skirmishes over the Siachen glacier, it has not prevented the general spread of secessionism, it has not prevented the Kashmiri Muslims from practicing *majorityism* at the expense of the Hindu and Buddhist areas of Jammu and Ladakh and from hounding out the Hindu minority of the Kashmir valley, and it has not given private investors the confidence to go in and bring some genuine economical development. Short, in every geopolitical, communal and even economical respect, it has been an outrageous failure.

But our Nehruvian spokesman remains, like his mentor, adamantly blind to the feedback from reality : *"In the circumstances, the demand for abrogating Article 370 is totally misplaced. It would only result in the further alienation of the people of Jammu and Kashmir..."*

Firstly, subtract *people of Jammu*: they would welcome the full integration with India, either through the abrogation of Article 370 or through separate statehood for itself and Union Territory status for Ladakh. Secondly, subtract *Hindus of Kashmir*: they would gladly welcome full accession to India. But then, they have already fled to areas that are really India. Thirdly, why would the people of Kashmir feel *alienated* by integration? That seems a contradiction. It might be more accurate to say that Nehru has treated the Kashmiri Muslims like spoiled children, afraid to refuse them anything, so if you tell them now that they will get equal treatment with the rest, they become very nasty.

The blatant communal discrimination that guarantees the Muslim majority in Kashmir by forbidding non-Kashmiris to settle there, is also

defended by our Nehruvian : "*There is little practical scope for settling any considerable body of outsiders in the valley. What land there is, is already under the plough.*" By these standards, outsiders should be prevented from settling in Bombay.²⁶² Moreover, "*there would not be many Indians from elsewhere in the country who would wish to actually settle there...*"

But abrogating communalist Articles is a matter of principle, of upholding the basic constitutional and democratic principle of non-discrimination, and is not dependent on just what number of people it will affect in practice. As BJP spokesman K. L. Sharma said : "*Equal status to all states and equal rights to all citizens is the BJP secularism.*"²⁶³ Moreover, as a political precedent, Article 370 affects millions of people, viz. those in states where separatist movement are encouraged by it and use the demand of the extension of Article 370 to their own state as a propaganda item or bargaining chip ("*our ultimate concession short of independence*").

Of course, it is not certain that the abrogation of Article 370 will make much of a practical difference for Kashmir itself in the near future. As long as the secessionist terror continues, and even for some time after that, not even the refugees will go back, let alone other. But at least the principle of India's integrity will have been restored. And it will discourage the secessionists in Kashmir and elsewhere, as well as the Pakistani agents, to see that India is reasserting its integrity on at least the level of legislation, that one level where terrorist created *ground realities* need not be taken into account and where principles can be upheld without compromise.

The argument of the *secularists* against the allegations of *minorityism* is that Hindus should be generous, and that they are not entitled to a *persecution complex* since their very majority makes it impossible for them to become the object of injustice. Moreover, the Muslims are a poor and wretched community who must be suffering a lot of discrimination otherwise they would not be so *underrepresented* in government jobs, business, the army, the universities: how can Hindus claim they are put at a disadvantage by this pitiable minority?

As often, the secularists defend their case by confusing issues. There is a difference between suffering legal constitutional discrimination, and being poor. In the Islamic Republic of Malaysia, the Chinese are second-class citizens, legally discriminated against as being non-Muslims, yet they are very successful in business, and considerably wealthier than the Muslim Malays. If the Muslims in India are poor, it is not at all because of discrimination, as should be clear from the record of other minorities. If Sikhs are *overrepresented* in government services and the security forces, if Christians are *overrepresented* in education, if Jains are *overrepresented* in business, it is not because of preferential treatment by the law or by the executive. In fact, if we drop the false socialist parlance, these communities are not *over-represented* in the said fields, it is more accurate to say they are *great achievers*.

And the Muslims, unfortunately, are on average poor achievers. That is almost entirely due to one single factor: their poor schooling. This factor in turn may be reduced to Islamic factors like large families, low status of women (keeping them uneducated and thus less able to teach their children and to create an education-friendly atmosphere for them), and stress on Quranic rather than secular studies. Short, the hold of Islamic orthodoxy over the Muslim community is by far the largest factor in Muslim backwardness (as well as fostering its ghetto mentality). [264](#)

By contrast, while Hindus may be doing alright economically etc., they do objectively suffer legal discrimination. They are denied certain constitutional rights and guarantees, as well as many political favours, and that constitutes a real inequality even if it is not impoverishing. The secularist line that Hindus should bear discrimination without complaining, since there are worse things in life (such as this abysmal poverty which these wretched Muslims have to suffer), presupposes that Hindus have no sense of honour. It assumes Hindus don't mind being second-class citizens, as long as they make a decent living. This presupposition certainly fits the stereotype, created in the centuries when Hindus were sharply discriminated against in the laws laid down by Muslim rulers. But that does not justify continuing legal discrimination.

Moreover, on top of this undeniable political and legal discrimination, Hindus perceive a serious threat to the very existence of their culture and society, when they look across the borders and into the future. Their acute sensitivity to *minorityism* is strengthened by the perception that the minorities indulge in aggression against the Hindus wherever they get the chance, and that they are also growing stronger by the day.

When you consider the population trends in the Indian Subcontinent, it seems inevitable that Muslims will make up 50% of its population in less than eighty years. Extrapolating the trends within India, it will be less than fifty years until the Muslims are again 24% of the population, the percentage which in the forties was enough to enforce Partition. Add to that the millions- strong illegal Muslim immigration into India, which will only accelerate as population pressure increases in Pakistan and Bangla Desh. So, the *majority* status of the Hindus is by no means guaranteed. Moreover, the so- called minority is in fact the Indian department of a world-wide movement, from which it effectively gets moral and financial support.

It is no fable or prejudice that Muslims as a community have the highest birth-rate in practically every country where they co-exist with other communities. In some article that set out to *debunk* this *propaganda*, three countries were cited as counter-examples. Unfortunately, the writer had not chosen his concocted examples very well : one of them was Lebanon. The cause of the civil war there, apart from the legitimate reaction against Palestinian take-over tactics, has been the fast rise in Muslim population, which rendered the earlier power division on a communal basis disproportional. The Muslims, now in the majority, want to abrogate the old power division and freely exert their majoritarian powers. The Christians fear that this will cause a speedy end to their age-old presence in Lebanon.

In Pakistan, family planning is a joke. The responsible ministry is at present headed by a fundamentalist Muslim, Saddam Niazi, who boasts of being one of fifteen children. He has declared that the pressure for family planning was *a holdover from the liberal secularism of Benazir Bhutto*, and that he did not intend to implement the policies of a woman charged with corruption and overwhelmingly voted out in the 1990 election.²⁶⁵ His stand

is not exceptional, rather it is the rule among Muslim governments. At any rate, Pakistan's birth rate stands at 3.2%, almost the double of India's.

Bangladesh, the world's most densely populated country and perhaps the only Muslim country that ever seriously considered a family planning policy (apart from the moderate states Egypt and Indonesia, and in contrast to Malaysia, which has actively encouraged a high birth rate among its Muslims), today also has a birth rate markedly higher than India's. Both Pakistan and Bangladesh consciously seek to solve their overpopulation problem at least partly by dumping excess people in India, where they can be useful for the long-term pan-Islamic design.

Kashmir has been an eye-opener for the Hindus if one was needed. In the first part of 1990, more than two lakhs of Hindus, practically the entire non-Muslim population, were driven out from the Valley. Refugee Arvind Dhar testifies: *"The aggression has been entirely one-sided. All central government employees (generally Hindus) were asked to leave their jobs, and those who did not were placed on a hit-list. One newspaper (Al-Safab) had a headline in March asking all Hindus to vacate within 48 hours of face bullets"*.²⁶⁶

Predictably, secularists and Muslim communalists have joined hands to deny the *propaganda* that Kashmiri Muslims have unleashed a purely communalist campaign of violence against the Hindus. Some papers declared that it was actually the Hindu refugees who were *"creating a communal crisis"*²⁶⁷ by fleeing to Jammu or Delhi. In their Newspeak, which calls terrorists *militants*, the refugees are called *migrants*, and it is an interesting illustration of the perversion of India's political parlance to see how even the refugees themselves have sometimes adopted this secularist-imposed usage.

Syed Shahabuddin declared, along with some *moderate* Kashmiri Muslims, that the Hindus could come back to Kashmir, and that their property was being looked after by their Muslim neighbours.²⁶⁸ But the first-hand information of refugee Arvind Dhar tells a different story: *"All my movable property has been stolen and my house was burnt a month ago.* But Mr. Shahabuddin says that migrants' property is being looked after.

Bhushan Bazaz, president of the terrorist-sympathizing J&K Democratic Forum pontificates: *"As far as the migrants are concerned, they should show boldness in returning to their native land. They committed a great blunder in migration... The migrants should take it for granted that they will not be harmed, physically or emotionally, if they return to the valley immediately"*.^{[269](#)}

It is worth quoting a reply: *"By advising the migrants, many of whom live in squalor in camps mourning the death of their kith and kin, to 'return to the valley boldly, taking it for granted that they will not be harmed...', Mr. Bazaz is mendaciously suggesting that these hapless people have fled the Valley out of an imaginary fear at someone's instance. The naked truth is that the peace-loving and peaceful non-Muslims were forced to flee... when they found that the goodwill of their well-disposed but unarmed Muslim neighbours... was of no avail to them against the orgies of selective murder, rape and arson perpetrated by armed Pak-trained militants... Considering that even a few gullible migrants, including a lone woman, were recently gunned down within hours of their return, one wonders whether Mr. Bazaz's facile assurance of safety to migrants emanates from his desire to fool the uninformed or to propitiate India-baiters in Pakistan"*.^{[270](#)} The Kashmiri militants, Bushan Bazaz, Syed Shahabuddin, the Nehruvian defenders of Article 370, they are all, each in his own way, objectively part of the strategy of the anti-Hindu forces on the Kashmir front.

The Kashmir Samiti has produced a report titled Riots in Kashmir, listing 85 temples destroyed in the valley, and claiming that 550 Hindus had been killed (630 with security men included; official figure 495) in the Islamic purification campaign in 1990.^{[271](#)} And one cannot just blame Pakistan, for even a secularist paper admits: *"There is no evidence to suggest that the average Kashmiri is fed up with the militants. Everywhere ordinary people are sheltering 'the boys fighting for a cause'"*.^{[272](#)} The common Muslims in Kashmir believe in the two-nation theory. After all, Islam itself instills the communal separateness in its followers. It is a communalist ideology through and through, and all the talk of Kashmiriyat as a bond between Hindus and Muslims have proven to be just wind as soon as the call for a separate Dar-ul-Islam was spread.

In Pakistan, the dwindling percentage of 1% Hindus ekes out an existence in constant fear of the never-ending harassment=92s and attacks by the Muslim majority (which is untroubled by any *minoritism*). A secularist paper, prudishly and secularly titling: "*Ethnic violence drives Sinhis across the border*", lets out the truth in the small print: "*According to [refugee Sukh Ram], most of the Hindus are forced to desert their homes because of their religion. 'We are not allowed to pray peacefully in the temple of celebrate Hindu festival=92s he said'*".^{[273](#)}

Moreover, at several places in Sindh, cremation grounds had been usurped by Mohajirs^{[274](#)}, funeral procession were attacked with stones, and women were not safe either. Pakistan Hindu leader Raja Chander Singh, who left Benazir's Pakistan People's Party to form the Pakistan Hindu Party, says that the Hindu migration to India is now (proportionally) bigger than during the Partition day: "*The future of Hindus in Pakistan is very bleak... They are leaving because of fear*".^{[275](#)}

So the Hindus flee, and Pakistan likes it that way : "*The Pakistani leaders... seem to be encouraging Hindus to leave the country*".^{[276](#)} A 16-year-old boy is quoted saying: "*We all think here that Pakistan is a country for Muslims and only Hindusthan is the country for us Hindus*". Perhaps this accomplished fact had better be faced: Hindusthan is the homeland and refuge for the Hindus fleeing Muslim states. Since India is not willing to defend the rights of the Hindus in the Muslim neighbour states, it should automatically grant citizenship to Hindu refugees (as Israel does to Jews).

With all this persecution of Hindus by these poor wretched minorities, it is quite understandable that Hindus feel they should reassert their own democratic rights. They have done enough for the minorities by recognizing their democratic rights and religious freedom. Justice for all without any unequal appeasement of any religious community should be enough in a secular democratic state. But here they have to confront the watchdogs of secularism, who know it all better.

A.S.Abraham writes: "*The observes side of the coin of 'minoritysim' is that the majority is held is to the victim of discrimination by the state. To indulge the minorities is automatically to discriminate against the majority.*

On the other hand, 'majoritarianism' cannot, in this scheme, entail discrimination against the minorities because, unlike 'minorityism', which is an unnatural distortion, 'majoritarianism, is natural and healthy'.²⁷⁷

The last sentence is merely a *scheme* attributed to the Hindus by Mr. Abraham, as part of the old rhetorical trick: if you can't beat their argument, attribute to them a weak or stupid argument and attack that instead. The very term 'majoritarianism' is not a Hindu *scheme*, it is of the secularists' own making, coined as a swearword for *religiously neutral democracy*. It is obvious that to "*indulge the minorities*" automatically means discriminating against the majority. Privileges mean inequality, and if one party is more than equal, the other is less than equal. No-one would object to the minorities' right to open (subsidized) schools, were it not that the majority is denied this right. Today, this *right* is a *privilege* of the minorities and a *discrimination* against the majority. Of course, there is nothing objectionable or anti-national in this right of the minorities, so the discrimination should be abolished by extending the same right to the majority (incidentally, this discrimination, laid down in Article 30, is glossed over in Mr. Abraham's column).

For Mr. Abraham's brand of secularists, constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and non-discrimination are not good enough: "*The fact is that 'minorityism' inheres in the very idea of secularism.*" So, he concedes to Mr. Advani that the Indian secularists are indeed champions of *minorityism*.

However, as a citizen of a fully secular state, I strongly object to Mr. Abraham's minorityist statement. I have never heard of *minorityism* either as a term or as a concept somehow functional in our secular system. We do not give religious minorities a veto against decisions enacted by a democratic majority.

Let us take the example Mr. Abraham himself gives. He concedes that "*superficially, the Advani position looks unexceptionable*", consisting of "*reasonable demands for secularizing our affairs*". However, it is not truly secular, for if it were, "*then they would also have to stop demanding a ban on cow slaughter, which is a religiously motivated proscription that cannot be endorsed by a secular state*". As usual, our secularists prove their point

by mixing things up. There is a difference between the motives for which a state enacts a law (which in a secular democrat is not Scriptural authority but the will of a majority of the people), and the motives that make the people favour the enactment of this law (with which the state has no business: they may be religious motives as well as any other).

The nice thing about democracy is that it allows for difference between countries. If a majority of the people in my country favor cow slaughter, then we can practice cow slaughter; and if a majority in India opposes it, then the Indian state can ban it. Both countries adhere to the political form of democracy, but the contents of their policies are different, reflecting the different will of the respective nations. Democracy is a formal concept, it is a procedure of decision making, not concerned with the contents of (nor with the motives for) the decisions.²⁷⁸ so if a majority of the Indian citizens favour a ban on cow-slaughter, then the secular state does not avail of a Thought Police to check out their religious or other motives or this political choice. A secular democracy merely registers the will of the majority and enacts laws and policies accordingly.

At this point, there might be one limitation: unlike the Islamic republics, who ride roughshod over the religious rights of minorities, a secular state should safeguard the religious community in India that imposes on its adherents the duty to slaughter cows. So, from a secular viewpoint, no compromise whatsoever is needed, and nothing stands in the way of enacting a ban on cow slaughter, provided a majority votes for it. And at any rate, there is nothing objectionable, or threatening to the secular character of the state, in a citizens' initiative to create opinion in favour of such a ban.

The Muslim League always objected to a ban on cow slaughter, and demanded a veto right for the Muslim community on every issue. Today, many Hindu politicians have interiorized this demand for a minority veto right, and don't ever dare to suggest a ban on cow slaughter for fear of provoking the Muslim veto. In a secular democracy, the veto right of a religious minority is limited scrupulously to those decisions that directly the exercise of their religious freedom. Banning cow slaughter is not among

them, so the democratic secular republic of India can certainly enact a ban on cow- slaughter the day a majority of citizens decides in its favour.

As Mr. Abraham himself writes: "*A secular state, such as we are committed to building, is one in which the religious beliefs of its citizens are of no consequence to it. It regards them indiscriminately as equal citizens are of no consequence to it. It regards them indiscriminately as equal citizens under the law.*" More precisely: the religious beliefs of the citizens are of no consequence to the form (the procedure) of the decision-making, but they may of course be an element in the contents of the decisions, to the extent that the sovereign citizens choose to take them into account.

Minorityism, by contrast, means that you give special legal rights and political favours to citizens on the basis of their professing certain religious beliefs (or rather, on their belonging to certain religious communities with political clout). Minorityism does interfere with the form of democracy. In India, while not overwhelmingly affecting the democratic policy, it does thwart the principle of equality in several domains.

Mr. Abraham attributes the wrongs of minorityism to another ideology, invented by his own tribe for the sake of rhetoric, majoritarianism: "*Just as 'minorityism' is indispensable to secularism, so 'majoritarianism' is its antithesis. To be 'majoritarian' is to want the religious beliefs of the majority to colour, indeed to determine, the values, goals and institutions... This is an agenda for theocracy masquerading as 'genuine' secularism.*"

All decisions are determined by beliefs. To adapt an example from Indian tradition: if you believe the rope in the dark room to be a snake, your decision not to go in will have been determined by the belief that it was a snake, not by the reality that it was a rope. Instead of belief, we could better say more neutrally: perception. If a majority of the representatives of the people decide to have a state-run economy, then that decision has its roots in a belief or perception that such an economical system will be best suited to realize national goals (of which the choice again is based on the belief that, for instance, distributive equality is more important than wealth creation etc.). It is for the democracy not important whether this belief is correct. Observers of economical history may believe that the faith in a state-run economy is unfounded, but before this minority belief can

democratically influence policy, they will have to persuade a majority to adopt this belief.

You cannot get out of this: in a democracy, decisions are made on the (issue-related) belief of the majority. One may deplore that these beliefs are often inadequate but it is beyond the role and the power of the state to help it; the thinkers and educators of the people have to raise the people's consciousness so that its beliefs become more adequate to reality. Non-despotic democracy can only register and translate into policy the actual perception of a majority of the people.

So, by definition, "*the beliefs of the majority do colour, indeed determine, the values, goals and institutions*" of a secular democratic state. Sometimes, some of these beliefs are codified into a doctrine roughly called a religion. Well, the secular state has no business with that, as long as these beliefs do not interfere with the formal principles of the secular democracy itself. Thus, the Islamic belief that non-Muslims must be treated as third-class citizens and debarred from taking top government jobs, is intrinsically incompatible with secular democracy, and must on that ground be prevented from determining the institutions of the state.

But legislatively acting on the belief that cows are worth protecting against slaughter, is quite compatible with secular democracy, even if a minority doesn't think that highly of cows. After all, imposing the order "Keep off the grass" in city parks does just the same thing as imposing a ban on cow slaughter in India. There exists a minority of people who don't believe parks ought to be equipped with healthy lawns. They don't mind healthy good-looking lawns, just like beef-eaters don't mind unslaughtered cows, but they believe that for themselves the freedom to take a shortcut across the lawn is more valuable. Others may respect the lawn, but they don't feel any duty to respect it themselves. Yet, nobody in a secular democracy objects to the imposition of the majority's respect for nice-looking lawns on this unrespectful minority.

This imposition of a uniform behaviour on a population with non-uniform beliefs is unavoidable in government relative to public affairs, and is no way a threat to the secular and democratic character of the polity. It become undemocratic only when a minority imposes its chosen rules of

behaviour on a majority, and it becomes unsecular only when a religious authority rather than the will of a majority lays down the rules.

Now, what is the fuss about this *majoritarianism* effectively about? What possible policies would constitute this threatening phenomenon of majoritarianism, it cannot be the issue of cow slaughter, or the re-adoption of Vande Mataram as the anthem, much less the abolition of the discrimination against Hindus in education or temple-management. Mr. Abraham gives exactly one example, and I don't think he has another : "*When the `majority'... wants to build a temple on a site which the `majority'... believes is the birthplace of Ram, then the proper course of action for the state is to assist, and certainly not to hinder that project. If it so happens that a mosque stands on the site, then not to allow the temple to be built for that reason is to be guilty of `minorityism'.*" this argument deserves some scrutiny.

First of all, the word *majority* as the term for *Hindu society* is a creation of the secularists. If Mr. Abraham distances himself from it here, through the quote marks, it is because he is using the term here in another sense, in fact its proper, democratic sense : a majority of opinion on the specific issue under consideration. By distancing himself from the term in this meaning, he wants to sow doubts that it is really a majority of the Indian people that want the Mandir to be Built. Well, that can be ascertained by a referendum, as the BJP has demanded.

Secondly, democratic states the world over do have the right to expropriate people or communities when they consider it necessary for the common good- a category to which a concrete meaning is given by the perception of a majority. Not only are roads built on land expropriated from unwilling landed farmers : sometimes as a matter of social reform policy, poor landless peasants are given lands expropriated from unwilling landed farmers. The majority of poor people can impose harsh measures on the rich minority. Stealing from the rich to give to the poor, you may consider it just or unjust, but it is one of the options in a democracy. And it is sometimes done, and then mostly justified as a corrective measure for past injustices (a case in point : positive discrimination policies like job reservation). So, if a

majority decides to take something from a minority, it is not yet fascism, in fact it is more probably socialism.

Nevertheless, the point which Mr. Abraham makes, is that in a majoritarian (i. e. democratic) system, no minority is safe from the possible extortions by the majority. For instance, in Bangla Desh the property of the Hindus has been threatened by the Enemy Property Act (the democratic caliber of Bangla Desh is poor, but it is quite certain that even otherwise, no majority would have come forward to prevent the enactment of this law). In fact, in most countries, democratic or not, minorities are at the mercy of the majority. What protects the minorities is not so much the democratic character of the state, but the effective rule of law and/or the kindness and tolerance of the majority.

Let us narrow the discussion down to the example under consideration : taking over a place of worship. On what ground was it reprehensible that the Soviet government, claiming to be a people's government, claiming to be a people's government (a claim which we will concede here for the sake of the argument), expropriated the places of worship in order to transform them into temples of modernity and socialism (like factories and bureaucratic offices)? The majority of dialectical-materialist peasants and workers took from the minority of feudal and petty-bourgeois obscurantists their places of worship. This was reprehensible because (granting all other claims) it interfered with the exercise of these people's religious freedom.

Taking a single, or let's say three, mosques from the Muslim minority, is less than a denial of their religious freedom. But it is a small factual encroachment on the material exercise of their religious rights. As such, it can be justified as a, merely symbolic, righting of an old wrong. In a juridical sense, the communities that own and use the mosques, or their Waqf boards, can certainly be considered the successors to the rulers that built these mosques and initiated the worship that is continuing there. So, demanding from them these few places as a delayed and merely symbolic compensation for the wrongs inflicted by the erstwhile mosque-builders, while leaving them all the freedom and maybe even financially assisting them to set up alternative mosques nearby, is not at all misplaced, nor

unjustifiable, nor in violation of internationally accepted limitations to a government's rights of expropriation.

However, the point about *majoritarianism* is not so much whether the expropriation of three contentious mosques is justified. The point is that a majority has the power to enact such expropriation regardless of its being justified or not. Conversely, a minority does not have the power to enact a similar expropriation, even if justified. A case in point: the Hindus in Bangla Desh have no democratic power to reclaim some of their sacred places which the Muslims laid waste, not in Babar's or Aurangzeb's time, but the last few decades. This separation between justice and power is of course one of the most fundamental political problems that humanity faces. A minority cannot democratically enforce its claims, even if justified; while a majority can, even when its claims are unjustified. A majority can democratically enact blatantly unjust laws and constitutional provisions (as it effectively does in Pakistan, Malaysia and other Muslim countries).²⁷⁹

That possibility of the majority riding roughshod over the minorities is indeed present in the democratic system. Yet normally it doesn't happen. Most *majoritarian* democracies do not oppress their minority communities. The very fact of running a pluralistic democratic polity will condition people to be respectful towards all the different components of their society. The outright oppression of a minority by the majority almost exclusively happens where other ideological factors condition the majority community to disrespect towards the minorities. The most important such factor in the world today, you guessed it, is Islam.

So, it is not the system of majoritarian democracy that will make minorities oppressed and reduce their members to second-class citizens. It is the contents that the majority gives to the polity, that may have this effect. In Bangla Desh and Pakistan, Hindus have been oppressed by the Muslim majority in almost equal measure under dictators as under democratic governments. Not the political system, but the chauvinistic anti-Kafir attitude of the majority community brought this about. In Hinduism, such fostering of intolerance towards non- Hindu communities, let alone active oppression, is not sanctioned by Scriptures or other sources of doctrine. Even if the continuing Islamic aggression against Hindus, both in the

Islamic republics and in India itself, provokes Hindus to an anti-Muslim polarization, this will remain a peripheral and occasional tendency.

There is simply no danger at all that the normal majoritarian form of democracy will lead to any oppression of the religious minorities in India. By contrast, it is already a fact that minorityism, the policies with a bias towards the religious minorities, has effectively led (even within a formal structure of majoritarian democracy) to a number of discriminations against the Hindus on the basis of religion. In most majoritarian democracies in the world (all except the few Islamic republics that know democracy), there are no legal or political discriminations against the minorities (first of all because minorities are only recognized as a relevant category in some very few contexts, otherwise there are merely individuals).

But then, in most majoritarian democracies in the world, there is no minorityism either. The recent claim of some secularists that *minorityism* is essential to democracy. That Hindus suffer from discrimination favouring the minorities, is not an effect inherent in the prevalent political system. It is a policy followed by Hindu politicians of their own free will. And it can stop the moment these Hindu politicians come to their senses, and stop enacting or maintaining discriminating laws against their own people.

This minorityism is not a legislative or constitutional problem (except secondarily), it is primarily a problem of mentality. And it is not so much a problem created by the aggressive minorities, it is at least partly created by the morbid willingness in Hindu politicians to appease minority arrogance. So, solving the problem of minorityism requires chiefly a change of mentality in Hindu society. It should free itself from the wholly mistaken notion that it owes the minorities anything. It has not done them any injustice (which is more than what at least the Muslim minority can say) even in centuries past, and fully discharges its human and democratic duty by giving members of minority communities full citizen's rights and equality before the law, as well as full religious freedom. Hindus should realize that there is no reason at all for them to co-operate in policies that impose on them an inferior status in matters like education, settling in Kashmir, temple management, or marriage rights. Hindus should shake off

the mental chains (nowadays called secularism)that make them tolerate these political and constitutional injustices.

14.7 Targeting a minority

"Majority communalism is far worse than minority communalism, for minority communalism can only lead to secessionism, while majority communalism leads to fascism", so some secularists say, citing Nehru as their guide in this vision of things.

It is what the white minority in South Africa has been saying for some time : if we oppress them, it is only oppression, but if they get a chance to oppress us, we will be exterminated. No Indian secularist is known to have come out in support of this reasoning. The comparison with South Africa is fair to this extent that, generally, the problem posed is the same : in how far does democracy (in South Africa called *majority rule*) have to be modified in order to give safety and autonomy to non-territorial sub-units of a nation ? India need not be apologetic about having this problem in common with South Africa: it is one of the main political problems of today's world.

It is a fact that majorities can do a lot more harm to minorities, once they really want to, than the reverse. The Germans never could have taken on the Jews the way they did, if the Jews had formed the majority.

Then again, it is not the number of heads that counts, but the effective power. When an army invades a country, it is mostly outnumbered by the populations it is out to subdue. The Conquistadores who committed the *final solution* on the native American population of the Caribbean and much of the South American continent, were vastly outnumbered by the population they exterminated. It is not just numbers and military might that count, but also the unscrupled will to go to such an extreme.

Moreover, what is a majority ? In Western Armenia in 1915, the Christian Armenians outnumbered the Muslim Turks. But the Turks on Armenia were not left to themselves, they had a support base in Turkey proper. And they exterminated the Armenians in that area. The same thing,

minus the genocide, we have seen in Cyprus: the Turkish minority, claiming oppression by the Greek majority, called in big brother Turkey, and imposed its will (Partition) on the helpless *majority*.

So, calling the Hindus a majority, is a statement that must be qualified in different respects. They are fragmented. They are outnumbered by the Muslims worldwide. In the Subcontinent, the Muslims already number one third of the population (in 1981 it was 28% and increasing fast). Most of all, the Hindus don't have the ruthless determination to impose their will, of which the Muslims gave proof when they forced Partition on the country.

But going by secularist parlance, and calling the Hindus the *majority community*, there is still no reason to postulate an imminent re-enactment of the German vs. Jewish story of 1933-45, with the Hindus exterminating the Muslims.

First of all, the relations between the communities concerned are very different in two cases. The Jews had not forced a Partition on Germany. They had no history of Persecuting and massacring the Germans. They were not sending infiltrators from a neighbouring Jewish Republic (they were actually preparing to set up a Jewish state in far-away Palestine). They were not forcibly occupying a piece of German territory. They were not starting riots.

The Jews were blamed for all Germany's problems. The economic crisis was because of : "*Jewish capitalists*". So was the German defeat in World War I (in which many Jews even outside Germany had in fact supported the German war effort). Decadence was attributed to Jews like Sigmund Freud. The Communist threat was attributed to the *Jew* Karl Marx (who merely had a Jewish-born, but converted, father).

This does not apply to the Muslims in Hindu perception. Poverty, the defeat against China, the non-victory against the Tamil Tigers, corruption, unemployment, India's poor showing in the Olympics, all these are not blamed on the Muslims. The Muslims are blamed for creating riots (which is at least partly correct), for oppressing and hounding out the Hindus of Bangla Desh, Pakistan and Kashmir, for having inflicted Partition on India (all correct, except that it is done by *some* rather than by *the* Muslims, but it

is certainly done under the banner of Islam). Then there are some allegations of things that in the short term are not actual problems for the Hindus, such as refusing family planning and a common civil code. But it is absolutely not true that Hindus attribute all their problems to the Muslim hand, the way the Germans (and generally also the Poles and the Russians) used to do with the Jews.

According to M.J. Akbar, : "*just as Hitler had given a frustrated Germany a target and that target was the Jew, so through the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, a frustrated country was given a target and that target was the Muslim*".^{[280](#)}

Before we analyze this comparison, I would like to point out that Mr. Akbar is in absolutely no position to blame anyone for making people into a target the way Hitler did with the Jews. Mr. Akbar is a Muslim, a congressman, and a Nehru worshipper.^{[281](#)} Now, the Muslims are still doing what Hitler did : blaming the Jews for all the problems. So many Muslim or Arab resolutions on any topic include condemnations of *the Zionist entity*. When someone falls out of favour with a Muslim dictator, he tends to get *caught spying for Israel*, and hanged. When Khomeini counter-attacked Iraq, he declared his real goal was Israel. When Muslims made a slander film about Rushdie, he was portrayed as *a Zionist playboy*. Stereotypes about the influence of *the Jewish-controlled press*^{[282](#)} and *the Jewish capitalists*, which in Europe count as unpermissible expressions of anti-Semitism, are current in Arab and pro-Arab comments on the Arab-Israeli problem.

And don't try to be clever by making a distinction between Jews and Zionists. In Europe quite a few bomb attacks are committed by anti-Zionist Muslims against Jews, including doctors, schoolchildren and citizens who have no plans of settling in Zion. The Islamic terrorists are not making that distinction, and neither are the Islamic governments who plan to destroy the state of Israel. If Israel will be destroyed, it will be with a chemical or nuclear holocaust killing millions of Jews. And then the Congressmen who have continued Nehru's policy of total support for the anti-Israeli cause, will say : *Wir haben das nicht gewusst*.^{[283](#)}

In fact, Nehru himself fluently went from anti-Zionist to anti-Jewish. This is what he wrote: "*In practice the Hindu is certainly not tolerant and is more narrow-minded than almost any person in any other country except the Jew*".²⁸⁴ (in practice, Nehru was certainly not tolerant and he was more narrow-minded than almost any other person in any other country except Hitler)

So, before Mr. Akbar starts to elaborate comparisons with Hitler's propaganda of blaming everything on the Jews, he should first of all belongs, are reiterating Hitler's propaganda till today.

Now, in M.J. Akbar's comparison, Jews were made a target for Germans by the Nazis, and Muslims are made a target for Hindus by the Hindutva organization. At one point, which M. J. Akbar does not mention, the comparison is correct: in both cases, the hatred aroused was nothing new, but a centuries-old animosity with stable historical roots.

While Islamic anti-Judaism (or "anti-Semitism") had three causes :

1. The belief that the Jews killed Christ (who was himself a Jew, cfr. blaming Hindus for killing Gandhi), which was a lesser factor in the secular Nazi movement, but which till today is a reason for the Russian Orthodox Church to foster anti-Jewish attitudes.
2. The association of Jews with Muslims During the Middle Ages, when many Christian lands had been overrun and forcibly converted to Islam, while in the Mediterranean many Christians were made slaves by the Muslims. By these experiences, Christians decided on a forward strategy known as the Crusades, they started by attacking the non-Christians in their midst: the Jews.
3. The fact that the Jews, or at least a conspicuous section among them, were rich an powerful. This was a modern phenomenon due to the 18th century *Jewish Enlightenment* (or Haskala), when the Jews came out of the ghetto and involved themselves in society at large, and yet retained a separate identity. This kind of hatred against successful minorities occurs in many countries, such as against the Chinese in Malaysia and Indonesia, or against Indians in some African countries. In Europe, it got blown up into a suspicion of a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world.

Let us compare this with the Hindu attitude towards the Muslims:

1. The traditional Sikh animus against the Muslims has a lot to do with the murder of the fifth and the ninth guru by the Muslim rulers. Unlike the allegation that the Jews killed Jesus (more probably the Romans did it, but the later Gospel-writers absolved the Romans and blamed the Jews for reasons of mission tactics: blaming the weak and wooing the strong), blaming Muslims for killing these gurus is historically correct. Thousands of sadhus were also killed, thousands of temples demolished, etc. But unlike the killing of God's only-born Son, this was just a huge crime committed by people, not a God-ordained event with cosmic dimension. And unlike the killing of Christ, it was not distant history, but recent history continuing till today in the Muslim parts of the Subcontinent, and the actualization of a doctrine that could any moment give rise to new crimes of the same kind. Jewish Scripture does not say that Christ must be killed, but Islamic Scripture does ordain an all-out struggle against the unbelievers. So, while the Christian's allegation that the Jews murdered Christ is largely mythical, the Hindu resentment against the Muslims is firmly historical.
2. Hindus have not attacked others (including Jews²⁸⁵ to avenge the crimes of Islam. Neither have they attacked Muslims to avenge the crimes committed by others (the way the German flare-up against the Jews was partly a reaction against the unjust treaty of Versailles imposed by France and Britain). If they have a dislike for Muslims, it is not by association, it is not because of a general fear or hatred of Non-Hindus, it is a precisely directed reaction to a collective memory of Islamic atrocities heaped upon them as unbelievers.
3. If Hindus dislike Muslims, it is certainly not for their being rich and powerful. In fact, Hindus have not started hating any other minorities for acquiring a disproportionate share of the wealth and the power positions. On the other hand, most Muslims who remained in truncated India, are not at all rich, though as a collectivity they are rather powerful. The suspicion of an international conspiracy is in this case not without foundation. The Muslims do have international co-ordinating bodies like the Rabita (the World Islamic League), with huge sums at their disposal for furthering the cause of Islam in any

area deemed strategic. Unlike the Jews, the Muslims do have a doctrine of world conquest. Unlike the Jews, they effectively oppress other religions, and they do convert secular countries into Islamic republics (e.g. Malaysia, Libya, Iran, Bangla Desh, Sudan): there is no guarantee that they don't have similar plans for India.^{[286](#)}

So, these are the suspicions Hindus have against Muslims. It is possible that inflammatory speeches occasionally manage to transform that suspicion into violence. But M.J.Akbar is trying to fool us if he says that it is the BJP/VHP campaign that has created this suspicion and made the Muslims into a targeted group. Firstly, the collective memory of the crimes of Islam is quite established among the Hindu populace, which doesn't need campaigns for knowing about these crimes. Secondly, if there has been a Hindu awaking in recent years, it is not thanks to any campaign, but thanks to reality. It is the stands taken by the Bukharis and Shahabuddins, the plight of the Hindus in Kashmir, Punjab, Bangla Desh, and the endless riots started by Muslim criminals, that has caused the Hindu masses to stop and think. The BJP/VHP have not created the Hindu wave, they are merely riding it.

It is not entirely impossible that the Hindu-Muslim conflict will further escalate and turn India into a giant Lebanon. As Hindus are afflicted more seriously with more Muslim violence, they may start reacting in kind. It is the secularists, like Tavleen Singh and Madhu Limaye,^{[287](#)} who are painting this picture of the near future. While I am 100% sure that Hindus will not start a conflict on that scale, they may join it unreservedly once a *minority* really gets it going. It is certainly not the *Hindu communalists* who will create such a situation: they wouldn't know what to do with it, they just don't have the martial character and equipment for it.

14.8 Authoritarianism

It is alleged that the Hindu movement is against democracy: "*For the VHP, Ayodhya is not an end but the means to an end. It has become both the justification and the rallying point for a coldly calculated bid to mobilize support under the banner of recalcitrant, vengeful Hinduism. What it is*

doing is not to defend Hinduism - the very idea that this is necessary in a country where 85% of the population is Hindu is ludicrous - but to hijack the symbols of Hinduism to serve the political end of creating an authoritarian state".[288](#)

There are not too many facts known that could give rise to this allegation. And in fact, I am sure the allegation has not grown out of interpretation of given facts. It has grown out of the slogan *fascist!* When someone is called fascist, on the basis of whichever aspect of his behavior or thought that he may have in common with historical fascism, the (intended) effect is to associate him with all aspects of fascist thought and behaviour. So, if someone is a fascist because he "*singles out a minority for attacks, like Hitler did to the Jews*", he thereby also becomes an imperialist, anti-democrat, advocate of violence, genocide-planner, racist, etc. That is the most important reason for the sloganesque allegation of being anti-democratic, which has been levelled against the whole Hindutva movement.

During the Janmabhoomi controversy, the BJP has demanded a referendum. Is this anti-democratic ? It is a shortcut to deciding on the will of the people, cutting through the corrupt horse-trading of the political parties, through the perverse arithmetic of the British constituency-based (first-past-the-post) election system, and through the *secularist* mental inhibitions of Hindu politicians. As demanded in South Africa, democracy will imply that the majority has the freedom to act as the majority.

Another case of implied anti-democratic bias among the secularists, was all this nonsense of accusing politicians of *building vote banks*. Well, that is precisely what the democratic game is all about : pleasing the voter. If the secularists are against this (though they support politicians in building Muslim vote banks), then they should say clearly that they are against rule by the voters. They could take the aristocratic line, like Plato, who pointed out that democracy could only be the rule of the vulgar, the uninformed, the people with no vision, because they are the most numerous. They could say: we are elitist, we advocate the imposition of our own principles as a state policy, and we don't want voters to come in our way.

Of course, it is a fact that far-sighted leaders are often unable to rally a majority, and have to give way to demagogues. That is one of the problems

of democracy, and those who decry others as anti-democratic are themselves not sufficiently conscious of the inherent imperfections of democracy. They should admit that democracy as we know it is not the final word in *government by the people*. At any rate, the solution for this distance between principle and popular support has so far been, to consider this as a challenge to the politicians. They have to convince people of the correctness of certain views and policies. So, rather than imposing principled policies on the people, as aristocrats would do, they should endeavor to make the people a party to the principled policies they propose.

So, far, the Hindutva politicians have not anywhere advocated the abolition of the democratic system (as opposed to the communists, who openly advocate the installment of the Dictatorship [of the Proletariat through its Vanguard Party]). The BJP stresses that it wants a common law for all and equality for all regardless of religion, things that are considered evident in all democratic countries in the West.

One thing that might be mentioned against the democratic credentials of the Hindutva movement, is that Bal Thackeray, the Shiv Sena leader, has made some naughty remarks about dictatorship. In some interview I read, he was asked what he thought of Subhash Chandra Bose's remark that India needed one year of dictatorship to get on the right track. And he replied with a grin that he fully agreed. But so what? For such remarks, the secularists call Thackeray *an unabashed advocate of dictatorship*, but they don't do the same thing about Subhash Bose, just mentioned as saying the thing which Thackeray merely confirmed. They don't mention the numerous well-meaning foreign commentators who have opined that India is too vast and complex and backward for democracy to function and to preserve the country's unity.²⁸⁹ Anti-Hindu anti-fascists of Congress obedience, like M.J.Akbar and M.S.Aiyar also tend to gloss over Indira, who actually practiced dictatorship. They all forget to point out that Marxism-Leninism, a strong component of the secularist front, by definition aims at the establishment of dictatorship. And they all forget that the point is not what off-hand remarks Mr. Thackeray makes in casual conversation, but what his party offers as a programme. In the Shiv Sena programme, you do not find any demand for the establishment of dictatorship.

There have been a few incidents of the Shiv Sena using muscle power against opponents. But this again does not prove authoritarian ambitions, unless you add that other parties, who use large-scale muscle and gun power especially at election time, have even stronger ambitions for dictatorship. But the parties I mean have succeeded each other in forming the government at the centre, so they have been in the best possible position to launch dictatorial rule, and yet they stepped down when they lost their majorities. So I don't think their authoritarian thrust is that strong, and the same thing counts for the Shiv Sena.

About the RSS, it has been said that its organizational structure is authoritarian. In an interview, Subramaniam Swamy (an erstwhile Jan Sangh leader, presently Commerce Minister in Chandra Shekhar's cabinet) once said that the RSS could not be called fascist because it did not advocate or organize violence, but that its authoritarian structure as well as its anti-intellectual bias are elements which the RSS has in common with fascism. And the two are related: an anti-intellectual bias inculcated in the rank and file, implies that the leader is doing the thinking for them, and they just obey.

The structure of the RSS is at least partly democratic. The general secretary, or Sarkaryavaha, is elected by the 450 district leaders, who meet twice a year (the Pratinidhi Sabha). The constitution of the central executive (Karyakarini Mandal), with about fifty members, is more intricate, with both elected and nominated members. The really controversial point is that the RSS top man, the Sarsanghchalak, is not elected at all, but appointed by his predecessor, like in a monastic parampara (teacher-pupil lineage.)

I do not know of any statement by any RSS leader in which he advocates the RSS organizational structure as his chosen model for the organization of the state. So, a distinction must be made between the political programme (which the RSS as a self-described cultural organization does not have, but which may be surmised from the programme of the affiliated BJP) and the internal functioning.

We may compare this with the Roman Catholic Church where the pope is elected by bishops who themselves have been hierarchically appointed, not elected. The idea is moreover that it is the Holy Spirit who arranges the

election result by inspiring the bishops. So, the Church is not a democracy. Nor is the Jesuit order or any other Catholic order. Nevertheless, it does not follow that the Church, a nonpolitical organization, intends to reshape the secular polity after its own model. And it doesn't follow that Catholic politicians are anti- democratic and planning to impose the organizational model of the Church on the secular polity.

It would only give proof of historical incompetence, if one starts using the typically modern category *fascist* for those pre-modern and pre-democratic types of organization. In the general polity, everybody is entitled to participation in the decision-making process. But in a private organization, the founders may reserve themselves the right to select candidates for leadership functions on the basis not of popularity but of loyalty to the project which the founders had in mind. They have the right to set up such an *undemocratic* structure, without being deemed an enemy of the political democracy in society at large. In the Communist Party, they do not allow just anyone to become a member, take part in the decision-making, elect the leadership, and thus perhaps force policies on the party for which it was not created (in which case the party would be helpless against a hostile take-over by a large group who collectively join and claim a majority). There is nothing democratic about the Communist Party, yet it is the communists' democratic right to privately run an undemocratic organization. By being a member of society, you have the right to political participation; but that does not necessarily count for private organizations.

So, an organization can follow a Parampara-system of appointment of the leader without being politically anti- democratic. Nevertheless, the leadership of the RSS is partly elected, though not by the mass of ordinary members, but by a group of people who have already climbed several steps on the RSS ladder.

In its actual functioning, it seems there is a stable consensus between the different components of the RSS leadership. A Sunday Mail report states that "the titular head, like the pope, remains infallible as far as orders go. Never has a single order of the Sarsanghchalak been questioned till date in the Sangh's history. This is not due to any totalitarian dictate, as the Left would believe, but because the Mandal and the Pratinidhi Sabha are like

huge counter weights in a balance checking the powers of both the Sarsanghchalak and the Sarkaryavaha."[290](#) It is therefore not accurate or objective to describe the RSS structure simply as authoritarian, much less as fascist.

Nonetheless, it is still quite possible that a certain *follow the leaders* spirit prevails in the RSS rank and file, and that independent thinking is not encouraged. I have been told that the late Guruji Golwalkar got angry when he saw people reading papers or books. He would ask : "*Don't you have anything more useful to do for the Sangh?*" And when you see the total intellectual output of the RSS people, it is not much. Subramaniam Swamy is probably right when he ascribes an anti-intellectual bias to the RSS.

Now, if they would compensate for this near-absence on the intellectual front with great activity on the street violence and terrorist front, then they would be feared and dangerous, and their role would be comparable to the Nazi squads around 1930. But they are not active on the violent front, in the spite of all the propaganda put out by allegation journalists. Several times, dozens of their people got massacred by the Khalistanis: what violence has ensued? Compare with the massacre of Sikhs that Indira's followers committed after Indira's murder : who is a *fascist* then ? They do not even react in kind when they are violently provoked. It is therefore that they are not getting much respect. The secularists despise people who don't take to violence, like the Tibetans, and they support people who take to terrorism, like the Palestinians.[291](#)

If they replaced thought with muscle, then others would be victims of their anti-intellectual bias. But now, it is they themselves who are paying dearly for their refusal to develop an intellectual dimension and to wage the struggle on the ideological front. There they leave the field entirely to the Leftists and secularists. One cannot even say they are on the defensive. Look at the humiliating consequences which their anti-intellectual bias has had on them. Whenever anything happens, they are accused and spit at, by those who are having the entire debating arena to themselves.

In the forties, they opposed Partition, together with the Hindu Mahasabha. Everyone else ended up agreeing to it. Yet, in articles written

then and today, you find that they are being accused, without any proof, of "provoking" Partition by "frightening" the Muslims into support for the Muslim League.²⁹² Unbelievable: the only innocent ones are being made the culprits by the united front of culprits. This shows how weak they are: it is always the weak who are being blamed²⁹³

By contrast, the Communists, who betrayed their compatriots to the British, and who actively worked for Partition, were back on top within a few years, respected and imitated by many other politicians including Jawaharlal Nehru. Why ? Because they had a thought system which was widely broadcast and fashionable, and by which everyone was influenced, so that everyone owed them a certain ideological allegiance. But the Hindutva force were mute cows without an ideology, much less any intellectual or media impact on the general public. Even the millions of refugees from Pakistan, who should have become a reliable popular basis or vote bank, could not be attracted with a political analysis that could pinpoint the causes of their problem and indicate a solution: the Hindutva people had no analysis, merely some emotions and slogans.

During the Emergency, many socialists were left untouched by Indira, while the RSS was made to bear the brunt of the repression. But when the Janata government was formed, the same socialists, who had come to power on the blood and sweat of the RSS workers, demanded that the RSS members of the government choose between their seat and their RSS membership. There was no come out in their defense, no front or committee of intellectuals to expose the utter dishonesty and absurdity of the whole *dual membership* issue. Everybody thinking was moulded by the Left, and had no affinity or sympathy with RSS *thought*. Everybody felt some allegiance to socialism and would not go against a socialist demand. And in shame the RSS people were sent into the wilderness.

These events prove at least that the RSS is not at all a fascist movement. Hitler would not have been treated like that, and otherwise he would not have borne it without protest (in fact, having made it into the government, he would never have given it up). But more importantly, these events prove that the RSS is totally absent from the debating arena. Their anti-intellectual bias makes them into a passive object of abuse and ideological vilification.

They don't have an intellectual apparatus with which they would be able to put their enemies in their proper places. They also don't have a propaganda apparatus to put forward their viewpoint (which would have been the first priority of any fascist, as of any communist party.) Therefore, they are at the mercy of their enemies. *Fascism* should be made of sterner stuff.

Even when they got the largest mass movements in Indian history going, the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign, they were not capable of putting the secularist Babarwadis on the defensive. While in the historical Ayodhya debate the secularists had no case at all, still they could get away with depicting the solid Ram Mandir case as *distortion of history, myth* etc. On the strength of the evidence, the Hindutva leaders should have been capable of instilling a massive confidence in all struggle of truth against falsehood. But no, they resorted to the weaker, anti-intellectual and somewhat dishonorable line that it is faith and not historical evidence that has to decide the issue. And even among their own followers, they did not wage a campaign to inform them about the hard facts of the matter and the larger issues at stake, assuming that the massive *Hindus sentiments* were enough.^{[294](#)}

Sentiments are enough to get a Ram Janmabhoomi movement going, they are perhaps enough to make that one-issue movement succeed, but they are utterly insufficient when it comes to building a long-term movement for the defense and development of Hindu society. A purely physical movement, of which the intellectual dimension is limited to rumours and slogans, cannot realize (in fact, not even formulate) its goals.^{[295](#)} Any movement can only succeed if it has an ideological backbone. So, the point about this unwillingness to develop an intellectual thrust is not that it is fascist : it isn't. The point is that it is a sure formula for not achieving anything in the long run.

14.9. Fascism in India : where is it ?

L.K. Advani is described by M.J.Akbar as having "*an interesting blend of falsification of history and his own cool and convincing personality*".^{[296](#)} What is more: "*He and Vajpayee are the careful camouflage of decency*"

over a nasty, vicious and blood-thirsty movement." Now, I wouldn't dare to say such crass things about a fellow human being, but since Mr. Akbar has said them himself, he will allow me to leave the sentences intact but with himself as the subject : Mr. Akbar has an interesting blend of a convincing personality (he has convinced many that he is an authority on communalism) and shameless falsification of history. Moreover, he is the careful camouflage of decency over a nasty, vicious and blood- thirsty movement.

That M.J.Akbar is a falsifier of history, should be clear from his postulation, in the very same article, of *a thousand years of brotherhood and amity* between Hindus and Muslims, and *"of shared culture, of a shared civilization, a shared vision"*. In reality, as can Islamic history, Islam in India was *"a nasty, vicious and blood-thirsty movements"*. It is never preached or practiced *brotherhood and friendship* with the Hindus. It has never *shared* Hindus society's *culture and vision*. That one occasion when emperor Akbar ceased persecuting the Hindus, there was a Sirhindi to reprimand him.²⁹⁷ That one occasion when Dara Shikoh translated Hindus writings and considered them *the mother of the Book*, there was an Aurangzeb to kill him. Islam was out to exterminate the Hindus civilization, as it has exterminated the cultures of Arabia, West and Central Asia.

To this vicious and blood-thirsty movement, M.J.Akbar is giving a camouflage of decency.

If *fascism* is to erupt in India in the sense of organized attempts at extermination of selected minorities, it will be in the pockets where Hindus are the minority, and it will be Hindus who get singled out for massacre. So far, the massacres in Punjab and Kashmir have not been intended as steps towards extermination, merely as a tactic to scare the Hindus into fleeing, which has worked very well in Kashmir, and has not been entirely without results in Punjab. If this gets really out of hand, Hindus may retaliate with mass-slaughter wherever they can. While the minority separatists have the guns, the enraged Hindus will have the numbers.

So, a mass killing of minority people is not excluded as a possibility. However, it will only take place if minority terrorists first go very far in their violence against Hindus. Unlike the entirely unprovoked Nazi terror

against the peaceful Jewish minority, Hindus will attack *the minority community* only after being very heavily provoked. The entire history of jihad in India, of communal riots, and of the Partition story, corroborates it. When M.J.Akbar compares the riots of 1989-90 with those of 1947, he is mistaken as to the magnitude of the riots, but he may be right in the tacit analogy that in each case (1947, Bhagalpur, Aligarh, Hyderabad) the Hindu violence was merely a reaction to *minority* violence.

A tendency of fascism taking shape in India exists among the self-proclaimed leaders of a different majority, or pretended majority. There are attempts to forge an anti-Hindu front including all the minorities, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and the Other Backward Castes, against the upper-caste Hindus. One of the embodiments of this drive is V.T.Rajshekar's writing, another is Kanshi Ram's Bahujan Samaj Party. These people claim that all the said groups are the big majority (Bahujan) of India, oppressed by the minority of Aryan invaders. They are finding that many of the groups they are claiming as belonging in their anti-Hindu front, are strongly attached to Hinduism. Nevertheless, their ideology claims that the majority is in fact not Hindu, and that this anti-Hindu majority should remove the upper castes from their positions and seize power. And they are quite unabashed about favouring ruthless methods to root out *Brahmin rule*. Kanshi Ram is on record as saying about the Khalistanis, that he personally doesn't care for Khalistan, *but I like their methods*.^{[298](#)} V.T.Rajshekar announces: "*As the 20th century comes to an end, the Aryan imperialism must also come to end.... A bloody revolution is in the offing. Don't miss this historic opportunity*".^{[299](#)}

An earlier anti-Brahmin activist, Ramaswamy Naicker, had said that "*we will do with the Brahmins what Hitler did with the Jews*". Another slogan of his was: "*If you see a snake and a Brahmin, kill the Brahmin first*". While the comparison of the German anti-Jewish attitude with the Hindu anti-Muslim attitude doesn't hold in most respects, the comparison with the *Dalit* (including missionary, Dravidian, Ambedkarite etc.) anti-Brahmin attitude is more exact. Just like the Jews, the Brahmins get depicted as: foreign (Aryan invaders), keeping themselves separate, observing maniacal purity rules, having a large inter-state network employing a common language (Yiddish/Sanskrit), very book-oriented, deceivers, always

favouring their own kind, dressed distinctively and ridiculously, cowardly but cunning, rich and keeping the others poor.³⁰⁰ Most of the things the Nazis said about the Jews, are being said by the anti-Brahmin movements about the Brahmins, including that they are a mere minority, and that they have to be shown their place by the majority, and be deprived of the undeserved power they wield.

That may not yet add up to Nazism but when I see the potential for violence in this movement, as well as its increasing self-righteousness, I know where in India a kind of fascism may erupt. But in the near future I don't see this budding fascism catch on among the masses. For that, they are all still too Hindu, not inclined to self-righteous fanaticism.

14.10. Who reads Hitler anyway ?

When you are accused of a crime, you are considered innocent until proven guilty. There is one exception :the meta-crime of making false allegations, or slander. When you utter an allegation, you are guilty of slander, while the other party remains innocent. This changes when you furnish proof for your allegation: then the other party is considered guilty and you cease to be a slanderer.

By these standards, all the people who postulate an ideological lineage from Hitler to Advani, are guilty of slander. For, so far I have not seen this oft-repeated allegation substantiated by any evidence whatsoever. For instance, Madhu Kishwar.

In an article with the promising title In defense of our dharma, she writes that the BJP, RSS and VHP "*display much greater fascination with Hitler's ideas and campaigns than with the Ramayana or other Hindu religious texts*".³⁰¹ That the ruling secularist dispensation has strongly discouraged the study of Hindu tradition, is a fact of which even the Hindutva movement shows the consequences, and the study of Hindu tradition in Indians schools and other media should be a top priority indeed. But that is not Madhu Kishwar's point. Apart from saying that the Hindutva campaigners are illiterates, she also says that they seek inspiration in

Hitler's ideas and campaigns: "*Their inspiration comes from Hitler, not from Ram*".

Now, this is a statement which can easily be checked. First of all, both the Hindu Mahasabha (1906) and the RSS (1925) came into being before anyone in India knew Hitler. Savarkar's Hindutva (1923) was published three years before Hitler's Mein Kampf. Clearly, the inspiration to organize and defend Hinduism at the political level, does not stem from Hitler, and it did not need any outside impulse.

Secondly, the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha existed when Hitler came to power. Have they sided with Hitler ? Have they even called on its followers to follow Subhash Bose and join the Axis war effort against the British ? Subhash Bose's title Netaji was just the Hindi equivalent of the German Fuehrer, Hitler's title, and the Italian Duce, Mussolini's title, yet he is not, for that, accused of being *Hitlerian*. But of course, since the Hindutva people are at the receiving end of all the blame, their non-support to Hitler is being turned against them, as collaboration with the British in 1942 and supported them in 1944, and yet they are accused neither of effectively supporting the Axis nor of collaboration with colonialism. The Communists opposed the British in 1940 (under Stalin's pact with Hitler) and supported them after 1941, yet after independence they have not been branded as collaborators with either fascism or colonialism. They can get away with it, while the Hindu parties are covered with abuse regardless of the stand they take.

The RSS has not glorified Hitler when he was successful in any larger measure than most Indians at that time (the facts of the extermination camps were not known until 1945, and for the rest most Indian were skeptical about the British propaganda). It would not even prove genuine fascist convictions, for many non-fascist leaders outside Europe were very impressed with the material success of Hitler's non-colonial empire, and with his formidable challenge to the colonial powers. Whatever the evil inherent in fascism, what outsiders got to see in the thirties, was that Hitler succeeded where democratic republics failed, and in the early forties, that he captured or threatened the centres of several colonial empires. So many leaders outside Europe, from Argentina's trade-unionist Juan Person to the

Multi of Jerusalem, were enthusiastic about the Axis successes. And yet, where is the proof that took inspiration from Hitler, though at the time his name didn't carry the stigma it carries today ?

Hitler applied some general principles in order to achieve success. He strengthened discipline in German society. Just like Indira Gandhi during the Emergency. Just like Mao Tse-tung in China : what little positive achievements are to his credit, follow from the fact that he could actually enforce his laws whereas the previous regime was hampered by chaos. Hitler didn't invent discipline, it was always a formula for effectiveness, and if the RSS believes in cultivating discipline within its organization (and that merely as a matter of *character building*, not as a model for running society as a whole), then that is just an application of universal principle, not Hitlerian or fascist. Unless and until Madhu Kishwar comes up with proof that the RSS chose its ideology and methods in express imitation of Hitler (and explains why in spite of such borrowing the differences are so big), she is a slanderer.

Hitler had made it perfectly clear where he stood and what he wanted, in his book *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), written years before his take-over. His speeches are also available. So, please point out where Mr. Advani and other Hindu leaders have quoted Hitler. Failing that, apologize for the slander.

Another case of slander is Mani Shankar Aiyar's article *The Saffron Swastika*.³⁰² Since I don't want to feel like a schoolteacher, I will not bother about the string of mistakes Mr. Aiyar makes about the pre-Nazi German politics and politicians. It is indeed very difficult to write about some distant country without making mistakes. But saying that Gustav Steersman, a true statesman who had nothing to do with majority-baiting or minority appeasement, was "*remarkably like Nehru in his commitment to democracy and his opposition to majority communalism*", is of course an unabashed declaration of his intention to distort the German situation any which way so as to make it comparable with the Indian situation.

Before we listen to Mr. Aiyar's pontification about the Jews in Germany, we should make it clear that here is yet another Nehruvian with an anti-Israeli bias which sometimes comes close to anti-Jewish bias. I have

been quoting him enough in this book, so let me rather quote with approval a reply to one of his tirades against Israel: "*I was surprised to read in the article A **catechism for communalists** (July 29) the false information about Israel. Israel is a secular state, and Muslims, Christians and other minorities have the same rights of Jews. Mani Shankar Aiyar mentions the Muslims 'driven out of Israel but nowhere once does he mentions the thousands of Jews killed, massacred and driven out of curious. Arab, where Jews lived as third class citizens and in constant fear. In fact, the largest ethnic group in Israel today consists of refugees from Arab and Muslim lands'*". [303](#)

Now, the comparison with Nazism. It is of course a plain lie, Mr. Aiyar, that Hitler ever campaigned on a platform *Appeasement for none, justice for all*. it was never the Nazi perception that the Jews were being appeased by the state. It was there perception that the Jews were accumulating wealth and power through violent *agitation* etc. There was no *appeasement* issue miles around.

When economic crisis struck, "*Hitler blame it all on the Jews. The BJP...blames it all on...our largest minority.*" This again is simply not true . The economic non-success of India is first of all the handiwork of Soviet-infatuate sleepwalker Jawaharlal Nehru, and more recently things have been made worse by the socialist policies to which most Indian politicians still subscribe (not only V.P.Singh, under whose tenure things suddenly looked critical). But no one is blaming the Muslims for this.

If the Jan Sangh/BJP had been a fascist party, it would have grabbed power long ago, and kept it. Since the fifties, it has had the percentage of votes Hitler had in 1928. The percentage of unemployed youth available for enlistment in Private militias has been continually higher in India than in Germany before Hitler's rise to power. The Jan Sangh formed part of the government in 1977-79: unlike the Nazi party, it did not take the occasion to liquidate democracy altogether.

Mani quotes an apocryphal statement attributed to Hitler by Thomas Mann: "*I am not an anti-Semite. It is just very regrettable that the Jews have this unfortunate identification with Marxism*". And then he equates this with an imaginary statement which he thinks sums up Advani's views: "*I am not*

an anti-Muslim. It is just very regrettable that the Muslims have this unfortunate identification with Babar and Aurangzeb." Of course, one shouldn't really walk into the trap of replying to Mr. Aiyar's rhetoric. He is a proven liar, and there comparisons are not really meant to inform or to argue a point. They are meant to put Hindus on the defensive and make them waste time on coping with such Hitlerian allegations. Nonetheless, it may be instructive to show up the falsehood to which the secularists have to resort in order to be able to blacken the Hindus.

Firstly, while Mr. Aiyar has yet to prove that Mr. Advani is *an anti-Muslim*, it is clear enough that Hitler lied when (if ever) he said that he was *not an anti-Semite*. This is not only clear when one has the benefit of hindsight, it is quite clear when one reads Hitler's own big statement *Mein Kampf*. Hitler did not cultivate a Jewish following, the way the BJP woos the Muslims and counts two Muslims in its leadership. Even without wooing the Muslims, without organizing *minority cells* in its party units, and without this rhetoric of Muslims being *mohammedi Hindus*, the BJP would not be anti-Muslim in any way comparable to Hitler's anti-Jewish stand. The most important ideological difference is that Hitler was against a group of people, the Jewish *race*, regardless of their behaviour (including their confabulated *identification with Marxism*); while the Hindutva people are against a particular doctrine and attitude, the anti-Hindu stand of some Muslim leaders, rooted in the anti-Kafir doctrine of Islam. Hitler wanted to exclude the largely well-integrated Jews, while the BJP wants to "*draw the minorities (who are kept in the ghetto by their bigoted leaders) into the national mainstream.*"

Secondly, the Jews' "*unfortunate identification with Marxism*" is not only a fable, it is also based on the crank racist assumption that Marx remained a Jew even after his father had converted to Protestantism and he himself had become an atheist. By contrast, the Muslims' "*unfortunate identification with Babar and Aurangzeb*", while never postulated by Advani (except in Mani's slander story), does make sense in the case of a few vocal Muslim leaders, who insist on continuing Babar's and Aurangzeb's occupation of Hindu sacred places even while knowing fully well (in contrast to the common Muslim) that they had built their mosques in Mathura. Varanasi and Ayodhya for the sole reason of terrorizing and humiliating the Kafirs .

In that sense, some Muslim leaders are indeed the ideological descendants of Babar and Aurangzeb.

Thirdly, Marx did not invent his theories in the name of Judaism, while Babar and Aurangzeb did commit their crimes in the name of Islam. Marx had no *identification with Judaism*, while Babar and Aurangzeb had of course a strong identification with Islam. But I repeat that L.K.Advani has never attributed any *identification with Babar and Aurangzeb* to the Muslim community in India. It is significant that Mr. Aiyar has to make his case on the strength of imaginary statement. *appeasement to strengthen his association of the BJP with Nazism. The BJP uses the word appeasement. It was the hard-line enemy of Nazism (or rather, of the German threat to British hegemony), Winston Churchill, who lambasted the appeasement policy of the soft-line enemy of Nazism, Neville Chamberlain. The latter though he could appease Nazi aggression by making concessions to it, such as Czechoslovakia. Similarly. the soft line opponents of Muslim communalism become in effect collaborators with it by conceding its demands and thus whetting its appetite for new concessions. Rajiv Gandhi thought he could appease Islamic agitation by conceding legislation enforcing the strict Shariat rulings concerning alimony to a divorced woman. But Islamic agitation found a new focus in the ban on the Rushdie book, which was also conceded,. and in the renewal of Babar's claim on the Hindu sacred site of Ram Janmabhoomi; so that today' secularists are advising Hindus to appease threats of Muslim youth taking to arms (or of Muslim retaliation against Hindus in Muslim countries³⁰⁴) by conceding the Babri Masjid. The term appeasement is quite appropriate.*

If at all Mr. Aiyar wants to link the use of this term to the politics of the 1930s, he should infer that the BJP, or whoever accuse the secularists of *appeasement* of Muslim arrogance, attributes to :the " *Muslims (i.e. those Muslims that wrest concession by means of threats) the same arrogance that the democracies perceived in the Nazis*". Well, the scale is certainly different, but in both cases the democratic forces are indeed dealing with the same phenomenon : the Nazis demanding territory through force, and Muslim fanatics demanding privileges and indeed territory (first Pakistan, now Kashmir) through force.

It is not Hindu society that will bring forth fascism, not even through this Boy Scouts-like unarmed kind of militantism embodied in the RSS. Hindu society just doesn't provide the necessary cultural basis for fascist politics. But Islam has an effective track record akin to that of fascism, with large-scale acquisitions of territory, extermination of unwanted communities, ruthless oppression and reduction of whole populations to the status of third-class citizens, and most of all, with a similar mind-set : division of humanity into chosen ones, inferior ones and doomed ones, and glorification of war and conquest.

To conclude this chapter about the allegation of *Hindu fascism*, it deserves mention that most original Western publications dealing with the Hindu Mahasabha, RSS, Jan Sangh or BJP, just don't seem to be aware of the notion that these could be fascist movements³⁰⁵, or they reject the allegation explicitly after closer consideration.³⁰⁶ Objective outsiders are not struck by any traces of fascism in the Hindutva movements, let alone in the general thought current of anti-imperialist Hindu awakening. While one should always be vigilant for traces of totalitarianism in any ideology or movement, the obsession with fascism in the anti-Hindu rhetoric of the secularists is not the product of an analysis of the data, but of their own political compulsions.

Chapter 15. The Hindu Movement

15.1 Symbolic Issues

The Ayodhya issue is a symbolic issue. Non-sympathetic people will say *only* a symbolic issue. But for people who are part of it, symbols do matter. The Indian Constitution specifically demands respect for the flag and the anthem, even though these are *only* symbols. So, all due respect for symbols. Nevertheless, a symbol is only a symbol of something. It is this something that makes the symbol into something that matters. And the care extended to the symbol, is only a symbol of the care extended to that something.

Ram is the symbol of dharma. Ram Rajya represents Dharma Rajya, the Rule of Righteousness. The attention which in a symbolic moment like the present Janmabhoomi-building is given to the symbolizing entity, Ram, is itself a local-temporal representation of the general attention given to the symbolized entity, the Dharma.

So, the Hindu activists should impress upon their minds that the struggle is not for a brick structure, though that is a legitimate symbolic part of it, but for Dharma. After centuries of Muslim oppression and Western indoctrination, even activist Hindus have become self- alienated and forgetful of the true values of their own civilization. Do they know what Dharma means?

In all modesty, let us attempt to define the fundamental distinction between Hindu dharma and the monotheistic religions. The fundamental problem in Hinduism is avidya, lack of consciousness. The goal of life is peace or happiness, the place and means to achieve it is consciousness. Therefore, techniques of consciousness culture have been developed, and they are available for everyone to choose from, according to one's own character and level of development.

In Islam, consciousness has no role at all. It suffices to be in the right club, the Muslim millat. Secondly, it is expected that you conform to the common rules of Islamic law and morality, and that you serve the interests of Islam, if need be through armed struggle against the unbelievers. Consciousness is nowhere in the picture. In Christianity also, there is a strong stress on morality, though ultimately it is not your moral calibre but only Jesus who has the power to save you. At any rate, it is not consciousness. In Marxism, consciousness is even denied any independent status. Mao Tse-tung rejected all soulculture as bourgeois diversion from the class struggle.

When some secularists have said that the Ram Janmabhoomi movement was not truly a Hindu movement, they were right in the sense that it was a consciousness movement. It involved a lot of physical locomotion, a lot of people giving their lives, and all that for a physical structure that would undo the physical harm which Islam has done to the physical temples of Hinduism. But then again, in the circumstances, such a physical movement was probably the best reminder and consciousness-raiser.

Hindu society may take up several more symbolic issues after this temple business is over. A very important one for most Hindus is cow protection. In fact, in calling it merely a symbolic issue, I may well betray a bias or lack of empathy resulting from my non-Hindu roots. I have never been taught to venerate the cow, but it is a majority of the people in India think that what is sacred to them, deserves protection, then they can enact a law enforcing cow protection in every nook and corner of the country. It is in keeping with the injunction of the Constitution.^{[307](#)}

Is it unsecular to ban cow slaughter? To answer that question, let us first make a comparison. The Catholic Church is very strongly opposed to abortion, and encourages Catholic politicians and votes to prevent its legalization. In Ireland, the people recently voted in a referendum to ban abortion not just by law, but in the Constitution. So now, the unborn children are the sacred cows of Ireland. Was this unsecular? No, it was perfectly secular, because the secular democratic procedures laid down by law were followed, the sovereign people and no one but the people made the decision, and the Church or any other religious authorities were

nowhere in the picture. If some people had based their viewpoint on abortion on their commitment to the Catholic faith, then that was their own private affair, with which the secular state had no business.

Conversely, in Belgium, a law allowing abortion was passed, in spite of the Catholic bishops' opposition to it, but in conformity with an appeal by the Humanist [i.e. atheist] League. The same thing happened in Italy. In these countries, the voters who were sufficiently committed to the Catholic faith to uphold its rejection of abortion, as well as the non-Catholic opponents of the abortion law, had dwindled and become a minority. So the secular procedure was to count the votes and legislate accordingly, without anyhow bothering about the religious or non-religious reason why people had voted the way they did.

So, a secular democratic decision is not defined as that one which will make the *bigots* the most unhappy. It is simply the decision supported by the majority in the relevant round of voting. It is secular from the moment no religious Scripture or authority came between the voters' preference and the actual legislation. So, if cow-slaughter is banned because the Shankaracharya demands it, it is not secular. If it is banned because a majority in parliament decides so, it is secular. And it remains that, even if the politicians or their constituents have autonomously chosen to follow the Shankaracharya's advice.

My impression is that a clear majority of the citizens of Bharat would favour a comprehensive legal ban on cow-slaughter. Given the right intellectual climate, talented politicians should be able to transform this majority opinion into a parliamentary majority, and finally into a law. If sacred places can be protected by law, so can sacred animals. Of course, if another community has another sacred animal, than can be protected as well as. A law protecting animals is in fact much more humane and progressive than a law conserving the status quo of places of worship.

Another symbolic issue, in fact symbolic par excellence, is the question of restoring old names. Local Hindu groups have demanded and sometimes enacted the adoption of re-adoption of Hindu names for cities, replacing names like Aurangabad which only served to eternalize Muslim fanatics

like Aurangzeb. One that would be a very resounding international statement, is the replacement of Delhi by Indraprastha.

Some people who think a centuries-old name is more sacrosanct than a millennia-old name, predictably come out with their bored non-interest, asserting that there are better things to do. It is an old trick: when you oppose a change, you say there are so much more important things to do. Thus, when the Link Language problem became acute in 1965 (according to the Constitution, the change-over from English to Hindi had to be completed by then, but those in power had sabotaged the process completely), the English-speaking elite had no intention of giving up its language privileges, so it said that you cannot feed Hindi to the poor, and such hollow excuses more. A cartoon showed ship sinking into an ocean of problems (unemployment, poverty, etc., the *real* problems), with the crew fighting each other over English and Hindi instead of saving the ship. This disgusting trick of declaring other people's demands (even if they are for the implementation of the democratically accepted Constitution) to be beside the point, instead of addressing them, is always used by people who have *arrived* and settled into the comfort of power.

There is no conflict between solving the *real* problems, and taking decisions regarding symbolic issues. The two are not in each other's way. Other countries, far poorer than India, have changed names. Burma became Myanmar, Batavia become Jakarta, Leopoldville became Krishnasa, Lourenzo Marques became Maputo, Rhodesia became Zimbabwe, etc. These countries also took down most statues of the colonial heroes, unhindered by any Babri Masjid Committee. So it is entirely in the hands of the sovereign people whether they want to retain the imposed name or restore the indigenous name, and whether they want to create, abolish or change national symbols.

15.2 The need for a Hindu programme

The Hindutva people should develop a clear programme of where they want to go with Hindu society. The slogan *Hindu Rashtra* has so far attracted a lot of bad press, with secularists misrepresenting it as a Hindu theocratic

state, with Hindu Khomeinis and a Hindu inquisition. This nonsense can only be countered by an ideological offensive which articulates the values the Hindu movement wants to realize, which weeds out obscurantist or otherwise negative elements within the current Hindutva ideology, and which defines goals and indicates the means. But first of all the Hindus should be clear in their own minds about what contents they intend to give to a *Hindu polity*.^{[308](#)}

The last half-century or so, the only ones with an articulate ideology, were the communists and their softer variety, the socialists. Everybody was constantly imbibing and reproducing their thought categories. In Europe, that dominance was never that complete, and it was overthrown radically in the seventies, when ex- Marxists turned against the dogmas they had adored, and intellectuals took a new pride in developing freedom- oriented and reality-based social thought. In India, the Leftists are still the only ones with an ideology, and the rest is still mentally fettered by thought categories copied from the Left. The time is ripe for a change.

What movement in history has ever succeeded, that was not based on a sustained intellectual effort to analyze the factors determining reality, to formulate the goals of the policy, and to outline strategies? If you want to achieve something, you have something, you have to know what you are doing. A movement merely based on emotion will get entangled in situations it cannot comprehend. It is bound to lose its momentum and peter out, or to discredit itself.

The secularists have been very unfair in their writings on the Hindutva movement, when they ascribed to it a grand design of a theocratic Hindu state. In bracketing *theocratic* with *Hindu*, they displayed their contemptuous willful ignorance about Hinduism; but the more important point is that they were wrong in ascribing any grand design to the Hindutva movement. The fact is that this movement has not more than a vague intuition about where it is going.

At the political level, there is a party that does the practical business of governing several states, like Madhya and Himachal Pradesh, and that has a few Hindutva- oriented programmed points, like the full integration of Kashmir into India, and the termination of appeasement policies for the

minorities. But nowhere in its party documents, or even in the scarce ideological literature to which it may refer, do I find an outline of the grand political goal of the Hindutva movement.

At the popular level, there is an enthusiastic movement aroused by emotionally charged issues like the Ram Janmabhoomi. The common people involved are, however, little informed about any larger scheme in which this movement fits. When communists organize a strike, they make it an opportunity to educate the workers about their ideology and long-term goals, But what has the common Ram bhakta learned about Hindu Rashtra? The consciousness-raising for which such a mass movement would normally be an excellent occasion, has been limited to some flag-waving and some slogans. Slogans are alright when they are the summary of a considered political programme. but by themselves they are nothing.³⁰⁹

At the academic level, there is just nothing at all. Communists have produced a vast literature. Not just party literature, not just pamphlets. Thousands upon thousands of academic studies, including graduate dissertations, consists of little more than the application of Marxist concepts to a given issue. On almost anything, you will find a number of books that give *the Marxist View*. On a slightly lesser scale, there is a large body of Islamic literature. Not just historical studies of what the medieval doctrine of Islam about such and such a topic was, but also studies on Islamic economics and banking, on Islamic social policies, on the Islamic answers to problems of development, of justice, of emancipation.

There is no such Hindu literature. Except for disinterested and esoterical studies of the past, there is no academic articulation of the Hindu approach to any relevant issue. There are professors who privately express their sympathy with Hindu viewpoints, but they are too timid to come out openly with a rebuttal of the arrogant secularist statements. And even if they are bold enough to do that, that still does not amount to building a Hindu ideology that can stand up to the modern world.

The vocal Hindutva advocates of this century have produced little more than a ***Bunch of Thoughts***, as Guru Golwalkar's work was aptly called. A very large percentage of the pages of all the books together which you may find in RSS-affiliated bookshops, is devoted to the trauma of Partition.

Another large percentage is devoted to comment on other misfortunes that have befallen Hindu society, or to the glorification of Hindu leaders. This may be useful to strengthen the enthusiasm and devotion of Hindutva militants, as well as their anti-Pakistan pathos, but it is ideologically not going very far. It doesn't develop a wellfounded coherent vision on a range of topics which any social thinker and any political party will have to address one day.

There are a few basic statements of the Hindu view, but they are at best sketchy, like Balraj Madhok's Rationale of Hindu State³¹⁰, or Jay Dubashi's columns (in Organiser as well as in other papers). The best achievements of the best minds among the Hindutva people still do not exceed the length of a speech or an article, and seldom do they have more ambition than to comment on one past or present event. There is as yet very little original or comprehensive work being done. Moreover, they are all isolated: never is there any Hindutva ideologue who sits down to make a critique of the work of one of his predecessors, or who takes up a line of research where an earlier writer had left it. So, there is no growth, no progress, no building on top of what has earlier been achieved, and no weeding out of what was wrong or poorly formulated. Short, there is no intellectual life in this Hindutva movement.

To an extent, that is due to the general culture and intellectual situation in India. When you read the works of these Indian thinkers who are still being praised in yearly memorials by their sycophantic followers, it is all very disappointing. It is the same from Left to Right: M.N.Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Bose, Bhimrao Ambedkar, Ram Manohar Lohia, Jayprakash Narayan, Vinoba Bhave, V.D. Savarkar, Guru Golwalkar, Deendayal Upadhyaya, they are all pretty elementary and second- hand. Of course, they were involved in social and political work, they did the writing in between other things. But the fact remains that they were no comprehensive thinkers who independently applied their minds to the political and cultural problems of their time: they just borrowed some basic ideas, wrapped them in their own personal style of rhetoric, and that was it.

Yet, there are papers today who adorn every issue with a words-of-wisdom column devoted to some words of these thinkers: Thus Said Nehru,

Thoughts Waves (mostly Golwalkar) and Thus Spake Ambedkar. If these quotes were taken as starting-points for critical comments, they could be useful; but they function merely as calligraphed verses from Scripture, to be repeated and repeated again.

If not among social and political leaders, have there been among armchair thinkers some who really developed their thought, and made it available to those who wanted to serve Hindu society in the socio-political arena? After Sri Aurobindo, who produced some powerful thought both during his politically active life and after, I don't see too many of them. Mahatma Gandhi, of course, though a man of action, found time to produce insights that still make interesting reading for those who can read him with a learner's, not an admirer's mind. But these great men have attracted nothing but followers. No one is building on them, taking their line further from where they left it.

Looking specifically at the Hindutva movement, I may give two examples of how thought built on top of earlier thought could have made a difference.

Secularists often quote Guru Golwalkar as saying that "*Muslims can only live in this country as guests, claiming nothing, no privileges, not even citizen's rights*". Since they always quote that line, I presume it is the worst and most fascist thing they could find in Golwalkar's work. Now, if there was an intellectual effort going on the Hindutva movement, this statement, which has been available for thirty years or so, would have been commented on, critically discussed, put in a certain context, and by now it would have been amended, rejected, or given a specific interpretation. When a secularist would quote it, the Hindutva think tank would reply that their thought had much developed since, that they had outgrown this crude viewpoint. Or they could stick to this hard-line statement, and argue, and support with illustrative facts, that reciprocity with Pakistan (which doesn't give full citizen's rights to Hindus) is the only fair and fruitful policy. Or they could up with some refined reinterpretation, or with whatever product of thirty years of thought progress. But no, the statement is still there as it was, a line in the Canon of Guruji's words of wisdom.

A second example is Deendayal Upadhyay's Internal Humanism. If I understand the historical context correctly, this doctrine was developed in

reply to M.N.Roy's Radical Humanism, which after Marxist fashion reduced man to his economical dimension. Against that, Deendayal restored the four purusharthas (aims of human life: pleasure, wealth, duty, liberation) as the co- indispensable components of a fully human life. I cannot find fault with that. It is very similar to the stand taken by the Christian-Democrats in Europe against the Socialists: *Man liveth not by bread alone*. Moreover, I think Hindu tradition is in this regard more sophisticated than the sources the Christian-Democrats have drawn. So, this Integral Humanism has potential. Nevertheless, it is extremely elementary. It is not a developed ideology with which you can analyze all the actual social and political problems. Or maybe you can, who knows, but at any rate it has not been done. There has been no follow-up on Deendayal's thought, neither to develop it nor to demolish it. It is now just another murti put up for paying respects to.

So, I see little of a Hindu Rashtra ideology expressing itself through organizations like the RSS, parties like the BJP, or campaigns like the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti campaign. The whole Hindutva movement is still now a body without much of a mind. It is looking for a mind.

This ideological work is in the first place a task for intellectuals, not for political parties.³¹¹ Today's thought determines tomorrow's politics. So, intellectuals have to create an intellectual climate in which the aspirations of Hindu society can be put forward as a realistic political as well as culture programme.

In the first place, they have to break the anti-Hindu bias that now dominates and positions the intellectual atmosphere. They have to put the secularist vipers on the defensive, by exposing their lies and distortions, and by exposing the abysmally black record of the ideologies and systems which they champion. This is not the most important and certainly not the most pleasant part of the work, but in the present situation which Hindus have allowed to develop, it is necessary to cut through this thick mud of slander and falsehood.

The intellectual war is largely a matter of terminology. So far, the Left has been dictating the terminology and thus it has determined the values that everyone tries to live up to. Secularism, need I repeat, has been given a

wholly distorted meaning, and it has been prescribed as the norm by which every non-Muslim has to be measured. The Hindutva people, who have no thought and no terminology of their own, have therefore been dancing to the Leftists' beat, and have tried their best to be recognized as secularists. Instead of proudly saying :*We are Hindus*, they are saying : "*We are the real secularists, they are pseudo-secularists*", a new variation on: "*We are positive secularists, they are negative secularists*".

This is a losing game. When country to live up to the hostile party's norms, you can at best give a good imitation, never the first-hand product. You had better put your own product in profile.

Of course, the Hindutva people are right when they call the secularists pseudo-secularists (L.K. Advani has managed to drive this point home in the public arena, which may well prove a decisive reversal in the terminology battle). If secularism means what it really means, as in Europe, then the people who make common cause with Muslim fundamentalists and defend a separate status for a state with a Muslim majority, religion-based personal laws, and religion-based discrimination in education or in temple management, cannot count as secularists. They are pseudo-secularists, and their opponents are genuine secularists. But now in India the term *secularism* has become so contaminated through systematic distortion and misuse, that it cannot be saved anymore. In the short run, it cannot be restored to its rightful meaning. And it can never be restored to its proper meaning as long as it is in the political arena. Therefore, the word secularism has to be dropped.

Why would the Hindutva people go on proclaiming that they are *true secularists*? Either the term means *anti- religion*, and then it doesn't apply, and it should not be held up as an ideal except by Stalinists; or it means a mutual non-interference of state and religion, and on that everyone agrees (except for some Muslim fundamentalists), so it should not be an issue. On the whole, the claim of being genuine secularists is justified, but it should no longer be shouted out loudly. Secularism is a matter of course for Hindu, and merely making it an issue is already to the Hindu-baiters

For instance, the amending of Article 30 of the Constitution so as to abolish the discrimination against Hindus in the matter of opening schools:

should it be demanded in the name of *secularism*? Of course, in a really secularist country, the Constitution would not impose discrimination on the basis of religion. But the issue is far simpler, and can be formulated in terms of a less controversial and more fundamental principle than secularism: non-discrimination. The words *religion* and *secularism* need not even figure in the discussion.

So, the term *secularism* should be de-emphasized and removed from the political debating scene. It should be dismissed once, and never mentioned again. By contrast, the term *secular*, which is not an ideological but a legal term, figures in the amended preamble of the Constitution, and it can continue to be used as a legal term in specific contexts. It should no longer be an issue in the political debate, except the day when Muslim fundamentalists want to abolish the secular character of the state.

Conversely, the frantic efforts to shake off the stigma of *communalism* should also be given up. I could understand, if they call you *fascist*, you feel the need to disprove this allegation. But *communalism* shouldn't put you on the defensive. First of all, growth-up English speaker outside India don't even know this term, and if asked what it means, they would probably attach a positive meaning to it. Perhaps "*stress on community value*", or "*living in a commune*", or "*communal living, as in a joint family*". In French and German, the term *community* means *municipal*. No one would think it means "*We are not communalists, we are the real secularists. It is they who are the real communalists*". Just change the rules of the game, ignore this terminological terror, and get down to the real issues.

So, what value should the Hindu movement put towards as the real issue, instead of the failed god of socialism and the fake god of secularism? As I have said, there is not much of a tradition of modern Hindu political thought on which to build. But it is immature to insist on starting from zero, let us just proceed from where we are. The latest thing in Hindutva-politics, still unsurpassed, was Deendayal's Integral Humanism. Underdeveloped as it is, it will do for a little experiment.

Let us confront integral humanism with the still-dominant ideology in India, socialism. But let us not do it the wrong way around, as the Hindutva people have been doing for too long. Let us not measure integral humanism

by the standards of socialism, and demonstrate what a nice socialism this integral humanism really is. Let us, on the contrary, measure socialism with the yardstick of integral humanism.

Socialism has reduced man to his socio-economical dimension. Actually, it is worse than that. It has denied some dimensions in human life, but even of those of dimensions which it did recognize, it had a very confused notion. The economical dimension is the dimension of gain (artha). But socialism denied the individual the right to pursue gain. It wanted to create the new man, who would only act out of a sense of duty (dharma) towards society, i.e. the state. But duty is narrowed down to a sense of serving, people who have the qualities for private undertaking are not allowed to take a role (dharma) convenient for their character (swabhava), they all have to conform to the one uniform role, servant of the state. Man would not seek excellence in order to gain from it, but merely to better serve the state. So, in the economical domain, man's natural striving for gain was outlawed, and replaced with a demand for a kind of servile devotion. The state itself took over the economical life. In chaturvarnya terms (but in Hindutva circles, few are as yet prepared to use these terms, for fear of being labeled a caste obscurantist), the Kshatriya sphere was usurping the Vaishya sphere. Moreover, the state decided to re-educate the people, so it also usurped the Brahmin sphere. Everybody was to become a Shudra, an employee of the omnipresent state. Since power corrupts, the inflated Kshatriya sphere generated a lot of corruption among its far too large army of people empowered to meddle in other people's lives (even while, in India, not discharging its proper function of protecting the people against gonads and terrorists, and the territory against hostile and greedy neighbours).

Well, this is still not much, still very crude, but it already makes clear that the general social vision of integral humanism can show up, and avoid, the defects of socialism. So, integral humanism, which is nothing but a new name for traditional Hindu social philosophy, has potential. It should be developed into a modern ideology that can give practical guidance in real-life politics.

This is not to say that there should be complete; break with all recent thought currents in social philosophy, has potential. It should be developed

into a modern ideology that can give practical guidance in real-life politics.

This is not to say that there should be a complete break with all recent thought currents in social and political philosophy. It is not that all foreign ideas have to be rejected. But they should be re-evaluated in terms of this integral and humanist framework, and on that basis, some may have to be rejected, others accepted or adapted. Revolution and wholesale rejection of the present is not a Hindu approach. The things that are here with us, do not have to be overthrown at once. They have to be accommodated and integrated, and that also counts for ideas, Bharatiya or foreign. So, even socialism should be allowed to run its course. This implies that now that it is waning, one should not artificially keep it alive. Meanwhile, one should positively come forward with an alternative.

On a worldwide scale, the time is ripe for an alternative. This is one more of the tasks facing the Hindu intellectuals: to link up with the global evolutions in thought and culture. There is a worldwide ideological vacuum, and yet, it is not the end of history, there is still an urgent need for guiding ideas. After the horribly divisive ideologies that have tortured humanity during the twentieth century, there is just no alternative to ideologies that one way or another come down to *integral humanism*. So Hindu social philosophy has a lot to offer, provided it comes out of the dusty manuscripts and indological encyclopedias to get actualized and updated.

For the relevance of the Hindu outlook to modern problems, let us, in tune with the very physical focus of the Hindutva movement at this time, take a very physical example: vegetarianism. Typically, Hindu social thought has always included an ecological dimension. Socialism and liberalism do not have this dimension, they can at best annex it. But it is an organic part of Hindu dharma. Ahimsa, non-violence, does not mean an unnatural and masochistic refusal to defend yourself, it is not a bizarre and repulsive item of moralism suppressing the self-defense instinct (as Gandhians have presented it). Traditionally, it means maintaining the harmony of the larger whole, caring not to disturb the ecosystem. The need to take this value seriously, has suddenly become very acute for all of humanity.

Therefore, Hindu dharma has since a few millennia thought very highly of vegetarianism. Not that everyone practiced it, but it was universally respected and honoured as an expression of both asceticism and sensitivity for all life forms. Of course, the respect for all life forms could not be absolute, it was graded (like most things in Pagan culture). Thus, a cow would be more immune from killing than other large mammals, than birds and fish, and killing insects could not always be avoided. Life forms with less consciousness, like lower animals and plants, were less immune from killing than higher animals, deemed to be more conscious and thus more capable of suffering. So, this non-violence towards animals was not a stern and God-given rule, it was well-founded in a natural and realistic sensitivity for the suffering of fellow creatures.

Today, countries that do not have this traditional value of vegetarianism, are discovering it. Scientists have found that it is healthier. Spiritual seekers cultivate the sensitivity that brings fellow-feeling with the other life forms. But most acutely, ecologists are finding that the world ecosystem can no longer sustain carnivorism. For producing a given nutritional quantity of meat, you need seven times the cultivating space that you would need to produce the same nutritional value of that you would need to produce the same nutritional value of vegetable food. So, the deforestation problem and the world food problem can be solved quickly if meat consumption is cut down drastically. Otherwise, these problems will become disasters, as the number of human consumers keeps rising. So, the modernist elite in India is wholly mistaken in considering vegetarianism as something rustic, religious and horribly deshi. Environment minister Maneka Gandhi was a better spokeswoman of the new world-wide ecological awareness, when she declared in November 1990 that all Indians should take to vegetarianism if they want to stop deforesting and desertifying their country.

So, the world is learning the hard way what Hindu philosophy has known all along. We need to respect not just our fellow human beings, but all fellow entities in this world. This goes to show how Hindu humanism is genuinely *integral*: not only does it take into account man's integral personality, but it also considers his integratedness in a larger social and ecological whole.

This rather physical example of how the ancient Hindu value of vegetarianism is actually very modern, may help Hindus to get over their self-depreciation, and to go and discover how their social philosophy too contains elements that are really very adequate for today's problems. The world today is looking for integral humanism.

15.3 Pride in Hinduism

It may be remarked that the term *integral humanism* itself does not mention its Hindu roots. Perhaps that is good. The term *Hindu* is merely a geographical indication, while *integral humanism* briefly says what it stands for. And it does no injustice to the essence of Hindu social thought. After all *manavadharma* doesn't contain the word *Hindu* either. On the other hand, should we not suspect that the coining of this term shows the pressure on the Hindutva movement to portray itself as *secular*?

After Nehru's crackdown on the RSS, following the murder of the Mahatma (in which the RSS was not implicated, according to both the court and the prosecutor), the RSS and its fronts, like the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, later Bharatiya Janata Party, and the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (All India Student Council), have avoided the conspicuous use of the term *Hindu*. They have complied with the taboo on everything *Hindu*. They were totally on the defensive, trying to placate the arrogant Leftists who dictated what was secular and what was not. Without suggesting that the term *integral humanism* should be amended or replaced, I do think it is time for Hindus to shake off their shyness about being Hindu.

"*Say it with pride : we are Hindus*", is what Swami Vivekananda taught his fellow Hindus. Some anti-Hindu people insinuate that this slogan implies a doctrine that Hindus are superior. In that case, *Black is beautiful* would mean that white is not beautiful; it would therefore be a racist slogan and quite reprehensible. In fact, every colour is beautiful in its own way, and it is quite alright to express pride in the long-despised black colour. And everyone is entitled to have and to express pride in his identity. Expressing pride is not a matter of superiority, but being denied the right to express pride, is very certainly a proof of an imposed inferiority.

Who is in a position to heap scorn on Hindus for being Hindus? What are these Babarwadis themselves, that they arrogate the right to look down on Hindus? What is the record of the parties, systems and ideologies to which they pledge allegiance? The record of the two main ideologies of the *secularists*, Marxism and Islam, is well-known. Whenever they heap scorn on Hinduism, they should be reminded of their own heritage.

For instance, Inder Kumar Gujral declared in parliament in late December 1990, that "*a colour is being seen these days which was also seen at the time of the Mahatma's murder. I don't need to give the name of the colour.*" What about Gujral's own colour, red? It was very much in evidence when Stalin killed millions of farmers, when he killed political opponents, when he exterminated the elites of occupied Poland and the Baltic states, when Mao killed his millions, when Tibet was overrun, when Pol Pot cleared Cambodia to make away for the new communist humanity. Even when India was invaded in 1962, that colour was there. who is this Gujral to be so derogatory about saffron?

In order to instill a proper and well-founded pride in Hindus, it is (once more) most important to restore the truth about Hindu history, especially about Hindu society's glorious achievements. In technology, it cannot match China, which was the world leader until a mere three, four centuries ago. But in abstract sciences like linguistics, logic ,mathematics, Hindu culture has been the chief pioneer. In psychology, it is still unsurpassed, though this is not yet fully recognized in the West, the part of the world that still arbitrates on what can count as rational and scientific.

Much of India's backwardness has been created by the foreign occupiers. This is not just a convenient allegation: in other countries too, we see the destructive impact of foreign occupation on the flourishing of arts and sciences. Thus, in China mathematics was taken to new heights in the 11th-12th century. The works expounding these insights were preserved until after the Mongol occupation. But when we read comments from the post-Mongol period on these earlier works, we find that they had lost the correct understanding of these advanced theorems and algorithms. The flourishing of science needs a safe political as well as economical cradle.

In India too, we see total stagnation in the sciences during the entire Muslim period, and a mere passive adoption of Western science under the British rule. Mani Shankar Aiyar, rejecting the proposition that India was a battleground between two civilizations since the advent of the Muslim hordes, states that Indian civilization has an *unbroken* civilizational history thanks to its "*utterly unique capacity to synthesize and move forward*".³¹² But the striking fact about the Muslim period is that knowledge in India has not *moved forward* at all.

The bhakti poets gave a new expression of old ideas, belonging to the spiritual domain which deals with the unchanging and eternal. They were part of Hinduism's answer to the challenge of this narrow-minded anti-universalist culture of the new rulers. But this Bhakti poetry is not proof of a really flourishing culture. As long as there are human subjects and things happening, there will be literature : that is not a sign of *moving forward* (in fact, times of disaster may be more fruitful in literature, than times of prosperity). But in astronomy, mathematics, logic, linguistics and philosophy, Hindu society hardly managed to save its old knowledge from oblivion (often just *preserving* it rather than keeping it *alive*). This stagnation and ossification of the sciences in India is yet another proof that the *synthesis* of Hinduism and Islam is a mere myth, for a synthesis would have been very fruitful and India would have *moved forward* with enthusiasm. In reality, Muslim rule stifled Hindu creativity and disturbed its social and economical life, thus impoverishing it both culturally and materially.

Of the British occupiers, it is known that they destroyed the existing system of education, that they dismantled industries and disturbed agriculture in order to integrate India into the colonial trade system.³¹³ They also obliterated quite a chunk of Ayurvedic medical knowledge, by discouraging and sometimes even forbidding its practice and teaching. Earlier, the Muslims had destroyed many universities, and if Hindu pandits are such an obscurantist lot, it is largely because the academic framework that gave life to their scholarship, has been destroyed.

Hindusthan was always a proverbially rich country. Now, mother Theresa has made it something of a synonym with poverty. But this poverty cannot

be blamed on Hindu culture. After the Muslims had blindly plundered large parts of the country and destroyed so much, the British made an even more systematic and profound attack on India's natural prosperity. They reorganized its economy to suit their own ends, integrating it in their colonial trade system, again to the country's detriment. When the British arrived, India was one of the most industrialized countries in the world, and one of its top exporters. The British economical policies, coupled with the world-wide impact of modern industry on the pre-modern economies, destroyed much of India's prosperity and economical; self-reliance.

Finally, this process of impoverishment was completed when Jawaharlal Nehru imposed socialism on India. I am not an economist, but my experiences with state-run enterprises like the State Bank of India and Indian Airlines have made me quite aware of the damage done to this country by socialism. The so-called *Hindu growth rate* is in fact the *Nehru growth rate*. If you look at Hindus achievements abroad, it is quite clear that Hinduism instills enough of a work ethic for attaining professional and economical success. But this natural dynamism of Hindu culture, which in the past made the country fabulously rich, has been stifled by this misguided policy of a state-run economy.

Even that part of the English-educated elite which is no party to the detrimental Nehruvian policies, but has on the contrary actively contributed to the amount of prosperity that India still enjoys, has also added to the Hindu inferiority complex. Both those who bring Western modernity in business and technology and those who brought Soviet modernity in the from of the Nehruvian establishment, regardless of their merits and demerits, look down on the traditional culture of this country. The strongest expression of their superiority over the natives is of course the English language.

Another very conspicuous example is dress. Both communists and liberals are extremely scornful about dhoti, kurta, pajama, pagari, and about rural patriarch Devi Lal who wears those things even in parliament (not to speak of Mahatma Gandhi). Colonial sahib Mani Shankar Aiyar calls them *ethnic fancy dress*.³¹⁴ A friend and compatriot of mine once traveled in a bus in Kerala, wearing a dhoti. Someone asked him: *What are you wearing*

there? My friend replied: *I think you know well enough that this is a dhoti.* The man said: *"But a dhoti is brahminical! This is the age of communism!"*

In fact, those people who think a three-piece suit is modern, while a dhoti etc. is rustic, are the really superstitious savages: they think they participate in modern culture, with its benefit of science, by imitating the dress of the people who brought this scientific culture to this backward land. This is a typically primitive and magical way of reasoning. In reality, all this ethnic dress is far more *scientific* and *rational*, in the sense of: adapted to reality. It is also far more *modern*, in the sense of: liberating what is human from oppressive forms imposed by convention. Compared with dresses, trousers and suits, the native sari, dhoti and kurta-pajama are far more economical (need no tailoring), hygienical (especially in this hot climate) and comfortable, and generally also more elegant: all quite humanistic and rational values. This makes Devi Lal the herald of scientific modernity in this country.

At present, the Hindu inferiority complex is still so serious. that all kind of funny attempts at compensation are in evidence. The best-known example is probably the contention that the Taj Mahal was a Hindu temple. Of course, architecturally it is not Hindu at all. But why claim the Taj Mahal in the first place? It is really very simple architecture, though that is made up for by the beautiful material used, which goes so well with the light of the full moon. At any rate, Hindus had better take pride in the temples which are really theirs (including the many thousands destroyed by the Muslim conquerors).

Another pitiable example is the persistent claim that all the secrets of modern science are contained in the Vedas and other classics. This does injustice to the real contents of these scriptures. Unfortunately, the *God in the new physics* wave of the late seventies has confirmed some people in this pretense. In Frithjof Capra's masterpiece Tao of physics, the chief argument for the basic consonance between modern physics and *Eastern mysticism*, is the juxtaposition of a pageful of mathematical equations and a pageful of Sanskrit shlokas: both of them are abracadabra for those who know neither.

A third example of crank theories compensating for the Hindu inferiority complex, is the belief that the whole world was colonized by the Hindus, lakhs of year ago.

By contrast this other cherished belief of Hindu *chauvinists*, that the Aryans were not outsiders who overran the Indus civilisation, is on firmer ground. This is not the place to go into the details, but suffice it to say that the linguistic arguments for putting the home of the *Aryans* in Central Asia or Europe, have been found wanting, and that the construction of a Dravidian interpretation of the Indus script is not at all convincing. There is absolutely no archaeological proof for the Aryan invasions theory. All the argumentations that have been given for it are, on closer analysis, cases of *petitio principii*. And then there is the internal evidence of the Vedas, which seems to exclude a foreign homeland within human memory. Even the secularists and the other enemies of Hindu society, who have been having so much propagandistic fun with the Aryan invasions theory, will have to recognize its untenability soon.³¹⁵ So, India can uninhibited pride itself on a civilizational continuity since about 5000 years, or more.

Another thing in which the Hindus can take pride, is their much-maligned social system. When Iran was defeated by the Muslim armies and the state collapsed, the entire society collapsed. It had no inner resistance and got Islamized very quickly. By contrast, when in Hindustan a state was destroyed by the Muslim conquerors, society did not collapse. With its weak state decentralized structure, Hindu society could live on in its non-state, organically co-ordinated way. This may sound too idyllic for modernist cynic, but the extra-ordinary historical fact of Hindu society's survival is undeniably there.

If the misrepresentation of Hindu philosophy by illiterate and based intellectuals and schoolbook-writers is stopped, another completely misplaced source of inferiority feelings will disappear: the belief that Hindu philosophy leads to passivity. This is a belief spread systematically by the Christian missionaries. With it, they kind of pass on Marx' criticism that "*religion is the opium of the people*", which had been levelled in the first place against Christianity. Salvation not by effort but by the pseudo-historical event of Jesus' resurrection, is the hocus-pocus doctrine central to

Christianity. By contrast, Hindu philosophy is a lot more methodical, realistic, and appealing to human effort and self-determination. Anyone who cares to study this, can find it out.

Sir Edmund Hillary declared, after a journey along the Ganga and visiting many ashrams : "*I became a Hindu. I was very close to the Hindu ethic. It was a great spiritual experience.*" This was unbearable to the Hindu- baiters present, so the press conference continued with a product of modern Indian education: "*When it was pointed out to him that having faith in the Hindu ethic essentially involved a belief in destiny* " (predetermination), Sir Edmund remarked : "*No, not in that sense. I believe a man can make his own destiny through his work and effort*".³¹⁶ No matter what faults you may be able to find with Hindu doctrine, belief in predetermination and impotence in the face of destiny (which is very much present in Islam) is not one of them. As Hillary correctly pointed out to these illiterate press people, a man makes his own destiny through his own effort. And that is not a modern novelty, it is precisely the meaning of the age-old karma doctrine: we make our destiny through our own actions.

Unknown makes unloved. It is the complete ignorance concerning the vast river of Hindu Dharma, that makes many nominal Hindus indifferent or hostile to Hinduism. That is why Nehruvian education actively promotes this ignorance of and disdain for Hindu culture, and why Nehruvian secularists want to intensify this ignorance by banning religion classes from school and Hindu epics from TV.

Microcomputer pioneer Adam Osborne thinks India has the potential to be the next Japan. What he has in mind is technological achievement and a vibrant economy, nothing hazy and rapturous. But the clue to this very tangible kind of greatness is pride: "*There is no doubt in my mind that India is one of the great financial success stories of the future. The curse of India is that Indians lack pride in being Indian. The moment they have that pride, India will be the next Japan.*"³¹⁷

Pride in being Indian means, for 99%, pride in Hinduism (unless you are a secularist distorter and consider the Islamic invaders' avowed objective of destroying Hindu culture also as *culture* and as *Indian*). So, this legitimate

pride has to be nourished with broad and in-depth knowledge of Hindu culture. The two enemies of this effort are the secularist morbidity that glorifies the destroyers of Hindu culture, denies the unity and integrity of Hindu culture, and discourages its study altogether; and the mental laziness of some cranks who get exuberant over wholly mistaken ideas about the Hindu past, without caring to critically and thoroughly study it.³¹⁸

So, this historical reassessment of the Hindu achievements is important to give confidence and to re-establish the unity of Hindu civilization. But it is only one component of the central task before the Hindu intellectuals, and not even the most important one. Any amount of negative self-image fostered by distorted history can be digested and forgotten when there are achievement in the present. The battle over the past, in which Hindus had until recently been pushed badly on the defensive, should of course be won. But it is only a supporting act for the intellectual battle over the present.

Hindu intellectuals should address the modern world and show the world that there is nothing shameful in looking at world affairs from the Hindu angle. At the socio-political level they must show that the Hindu approach leads to a more humane and more satisfactory polity than the approach from the Islamic and the Marxist angles. A more advanced and more subtle task will be, to improve upon the reason-oriented and democratic Western approach: this has recently been the best we have, but it should not be taken as the ultimate in human civilization.

15.4 From Ayodhya to Indraprastha

While thinkers create a new intellectual climate in post- Nehruvian India, the task of political parties like the BJP, is the listen. And then, it is their own business to frame policies that are realistically in tune with this new thinking. Politics is an autonomous sphere, and its personnel is free to take or not take its inspiration from a line of thought which intellectuals have developed. But in fact it has no choice but to be determined by the dominant ideological climate.

Conversely, the thought that gives form to the aspirations of Hindu society, is not tied to any political party. Not so long ago, a BJP leader said : "*We will not allow Congress to play the Hindu card*". But from a Hindu viewpoint, it is just as well if Congress or any other party amends Article 30 or reintegrates Kashmir with India. Party workers may identify strongly with the success of their organization, but after all it is merely an instrument for realizing a programme beneficial to Hindu society. Once a convincing thought current has been created, all kinds of people and parties will tap into it, and that is precisely the sign of its success. Parties cannot keep ideas to themselves, but they may profit from being the most consistent in advocating and applying them.

Till recently, most parties pledged their allegiance to some form of socialist ideology was visible from the very fact that different parties declared their intention of being instruments of socialism. Even the BJP in 1984 opted for some hazy thing called Gandhian socialism. This was yet another proof of how the Hindutva movement behaved like a mercenary looking for an employer, i.e. an ideology, because it was ignorant or ashamed of its own ideological roots. They had to borrow the socialists' platform and slogans. The decline and fall of socialism is a good occasion to drop all this second-hand nonsense and develop a modern Hindu programme

In the short term, Hindu politicians would do well to concentrate on non-controversial issues like the abolition of the discrimination against the majority religion in state control over temples and, most of all, educational institutes (Article 30). This demand is perfectly unobjectionable. Anyone who objects to it, exposes himself as a supporter of religion-based discrimination in secular affairs, i.e. as a communalist. This issue, while of no concern to the minorities, is at the same time a top priority for Hindu society.

By contrast, issue which affect the other communities but not Hindu society itself, should be relegated to second rank. This debate about the common Civil Code, or in effective terms, the abolition of the separate Muslim Personal Law, is not immediately important for Hindu tradition (which should however not be totally identified with its old forms) to leave

these matters to the community rather than to regulate it centrally and uniformly.³¹⁹ Of course, it is not consistent with the generally Western-style Constitution which India has adopted in 1950 (largely based on the colonial Government of India Act of 1935). But then, if even West-oriented secularists have not cared to implement the Constitutional injunction to enact a common Civil Code, Hindus should not feel compelled to hurry when it is more expedient to settle other matters first.

When Westerners hear about this political Hinduism, this Hindu Rashtra movement, they wonder what colourful ideas might be involved. But it is not all that exotic. A political party that champions Hindu Rashtra and comes to power, what is it going to do? Change the flag or the anthem? Rename India's capital Indraprastha or move it to Ujjain, the historical capital of Vikramaditya? Those are the kind of things which many anti-colonial movements have done upon coming to power, but they are *merely* symbolic. After that, the day-to-day business of government starts.

A lot of the government decisions will be of the same kind as those taken by non-Hindu governments in similar circumstances. It will have to balance the budget, privatize inefficient state enterprises, encourage education, ensure social justice, fight crime and corruption both at the symptom and the *root cause* level, and all these other mundane things. The Hindu Rashtra will simply be a modern state, a democratic federal state, with political and religious pluralism, a free press, a free market economy with social security checks, all these common-sense things will be in common with most free countries. It may promote Sanskrit, yoga, traditional music and dancing, all these colourful things, but in politics it will not be all that exotic.

But then, concentrating on these normal common-sense policies, after the first assertions of post-colonial restoration of the national Hindu culture are completed, already constitutes a substantial change of policy away from the Nehruvian pattern. In fact, in the short term its most valuable contribution to the Indian polity will not be the introduction of new concepts and policies, but the scrapping of the vast amounts of nonsense that the present Nehruvian dispensation continues to indulge in.

Take this *National Integration Council* and this *Minorities Commission*. In all the growth-up countries of the world, subnational communities look

after themselves without weighing on the polity. But in India, Hindus and their state are told that they should *instill confidence* in the minorities. And they should foster the *emotional integration* of the country by banning everything the might *hurt the feelings* of the minorities, including the historical truth. As if Hindus owe the minorities anything. They give them full religious freedom, which is what they would get in most democratic countries, and which is all they would get. For the rest, a secular state does not recognize anything like *minority communities*, but treats all citizens as equal individuals. Cutting out the Marxist and Minorityist nonsense will already be an invaluable service to India's integrity, progress and prosperity.

In a recent article, Swapan Dasgupta has off-hand made the point that the BJP has the potential to play a leading role in Indian democratic politics, following the model of the Christian Democrats, who are centre-stage in the politics of stable European democracies like Italy, Germany, Holland and Belgium. Of course, that is a choice the party the party will have to make, as against perhaps more radical alternatives. But at least, finally commentators are dropping these hysterical outcries about *Hindu fascism*, and opening their eyes to the possibility that a Hindu party can stand for something else than Khomeini-type extremism.

A party which champions traditional values embedded in a broad religious tradition, is not perforce a fundamentalist and *theocratic* party. The Christian Democratic parties in Europe have played an important stabilizing role as centrist and integrationist forces. They have championed cultural and human values against the materialist accent in the socialist and liberal party programmes. And they have championed the harmony model against the class struggle model: a similar stand is very much the need of the hour in Indian politics.^{[320](#)}

Swapan Dasgupta comments on Murli Manohar Joshi's election as party president of the BJP: "*It is one thing of offer, as mr. Advani has consistently done, a powerful critique of the prevailing political culture. But the problem lies in designing an alternative... How, for example, does the concept of Hindu Rashtra...square with the notion of 'justice for all and appeasement of none? The campaign for the Ram Mandir, while important in symbolic terms, is unlikely to be a substitute for a*

comprehensive, alternative philosophy. Having tapped the reservoirs of anti-status quo, the BJP' is unlikely to progress if its critique stops at the secular-communal issue. Mr. Advani has struck a powerful blow at the shibboleths of Nehruvian consensus; his successor will be frittering away the advantages if a simultaneous assault is not launched on the other article of the reviled faith - socialism". [321](#)

It is correct that Hindu society faces more problems than just minorityism. In fact, the secularists are right in considering the minorityism problem a bit over-publicized and exaggerated: a few amendments to the Constitution and dropping as few bad habits in day-to-day politicking will do to end this minorityism. Then, India will be just a secular democracy like any other. A few decisions on symbolic issues will do to make it a Hindu democracy (one shouldn't make the socialist mistake of over-estimating the importance of the state for the well-being of Hindu society). I agree that these things, few in number, are easier said than done. But in the whole volume of political issues, it is clear that a political party will have more on its mind than Hindu Rashtra.

So, that is where the culture movement for real decolonization and real self-determination of Hindu society parts company with the political parties who champion Hindu causes and try to please the Hindu vote bank. Politics is an autonomous sphere in society, and it is but natural for advocates of Hindu culture to respect it as such. It is quite alright that politicians have other things to do apart from the explicitly Hindu issues.

That is why I do not follow those purists of the Hindutva movement who protest that the BJP shouldn't waste time on such petty politicking as, for instance, this demand for *statehood for Delhi*. Of course, Hindu society couldn't care less whether Delhi is a Union Territory or a State, and whether the BJP can have a chief minister there (which is what this demand is all about). But then, that is politics, and those politicians have a right to work on what is purely a power issue. No one protests that the Birla family, the billionaires who go on building temples, also spends time making money instead of exclusively serving Hindu society by building temples. So, who cares if the BJP, or whatever Hindu party to emerge in future, practices power politics and electoral politics.

It is but normal and healthy to have other things to do apart from affirming your identity. It was the Soviet Union that wasted tonnes of paper and deplorably long stretches of time in appending eulogies of Socialism to every book or speech on any and every topic. It is in the Islamic republics that this strains are put on the economy by fantastic demands for *Islamic economic*. For Hindu politicians, it is quite alright to go beyond identify and to get down to non-ideological business. It is only in its general spirit that economics and other mundane matters can have a *Hindu* character. Apart from that, things are just what they are.

As for strictly political issues, I might mention two. There have been proposals to reform the Indian political system into a presidential system, as recently by L.K.Advani. This is a matter which in one sense or the other affects the efficiency of government, and since this is the only state Hindus have (apart from Nepal), the government of this state is a secular matter of importance for Hindu society. The same thing counts for proposals to reform the electoral procedure.^{[322](#)} Such reforms do not make the state more Hindu, but they may be legitimate concerns of responsible politicians.

If such strictly political work makes them neglect their duty to Hindu culture and society, then another party will criticize them for this neglect, and declare itself a better defender of Hindu values and interests - provided the Hindu consciousness pervades the though climate which all politicians imbibe, and which entices them to take up Hindu issues. It is this thought climate that determines the programmes and behavior of the political class. That is why political parties championing Hindutva are really only a secondary phenomenon, a materialization of the prevalent thinking.

In fact, it remains to be seen whether even the organizations being attacked as *Hindu communalist*, are such staunch champions of the Hindu cause in the first place. Some of their former prominents are not so sure. Balraj Madhok, president of the Jan Sangh during its apex in 1966-67, has criticized his former party (now reconstituted as the BJP) of opportunism, of having no ideological backbone. I cannot judge that, but I would hardly expect many politicians to be all that principled. And in fact, one should see the bright side of the fact that so many politicians are such opportunists. If the BJP could be very wavering in its Hindu convictions when the

secularists were on the offensive, you can be sure that Congress will be very wavering in its secularist convictions once Hinduism (or Integral Humanism, or whichever name of the anti-and post-colonial upsurge of the native culture will be fashionable) becomes respected.

It is quite a mistake to think that these mass movements and political parties are the leaders of the Hindu awakening. Their resolutions and programmes are but the visible shapes brought about by the lines of force of the prevalent thought configuration, like iron filings giving expression to the weightless and invisible magnetic field. The so-called leaders will easily fall in line and gladly make themselves instruments of a Hindu future, once their attachment to outdated doctrines is removed by the thought currents of Sanatana Dharma.

Glossary

adhyatmik	:	spiritual
AIR	:	All-India Radio
akhand	:	unbroken, uninterrupted
akhara	:	arena; martial monastery
AMU	:	Aligarh Muslim University
archana	:	worship
archanavatar	:	worship-incarnation, idol
avarna	:	outside the varna system
avatar	:	incarnation of a god
Babarwadi	:	follower of Babar; Indian secularist
Bajrang Dal	:	"Hanuman Team"
bandh	:	closing, strike
bhajan	:	devotional song, psalm
bhakt	:	devotee
Bharat	:	India
Bharatiyatva	:	Indian-ness
BHU	:	Banaras Hindu University
BJP	:	Bharatiya Janata (Indian People's) Party
(AI)BMAC	:	(All-India) Babri Masjid Action Committee
BMMCC	:	Babri Masjid Movement Co-ordination Committee
bodhi	:	awakening, enlightenment
brahmin	:	varna of keeping and transmitting knowledge
BSP	:	Bahujan Samaj (Masses' Society) Party
burqa	:	veil covering a Muslim woman's face
chabootra:	:	platform
communalism	:	ideology championing the political unity and secular interests of a religious community
Congress-I	:	Indira Congress
CPI	:	Communist Party of India
CPI(M), CPM	:	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
crore	:	ten million
dacoit	:	armed robber, criminal
dalit	:	oppressed, downtrodden
dharma	:	duty; world order; religion
dharna	:	sit-down strike
dhoti	:	cloth covering hips and legs
DMK	:	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Dravida Forward Group)
doordarshan	:	television: India's TV network
ekatmata	:	"belonging to a single self", integrated-ness
fatwa	:	Islamic juridical opinion, verdict
garbha-griha	:	womb-house, sanctum sanctorum
ghat	:	bathing-place
gherao	:	lock-in strike
goonda	:	street fighter, criminal
Granth	:	Sikh Scripture
granthi	:	reciter from the Granth
guna	:	quality, characteristic
gurudwara	:	Sikh temple
Hadis	:	traditions of the Prophet
harijan	:	"God's people", the untouchables
HMS	:	Hindu Maha Sabha (Great-Assembly)
imam	:	prayer-leader in mosque
IPF	:	Indian People's Front
IUML	:	Indian Union Muslim League

janmabhoomi	:	birthplace
janmasthan	:	birthplace
jati	:	caste, endogamous group
JD	:	Janata Dal (People's Group)
jihad	:	Islamic war against the Kafirs
Kafir	:	non-Muslim, Pagan
kar seva	:	manual service
khatib	:	reader in mosque
kirtan	:	devotional chant
kshatriya	:	varna entrusted with defending and ruling
kula	:	extended family
kulapati	:	"family-leader" ; vice-chancellor
kurta	:	loose shirt
lakh	:	one hundred thousand
Lok Sabha	:	People's Assembly (lower house of Parliament,
directly elected)		
mahant	:	temple high-priest
mandir	:	temple
masjid	:	mosque
math	:	monastery, abbey
millat	:	(the world Muslim) community
MIM	:	Majlis-e Ittehad-ul Muslimeen (Muslims' Unity
Council)		
MLA	:	Member of Legislative Assembly
muazzin	:	man who calls the Muslims to prayer
murti	:	idol
mutwalli	:	mosque manager
naib	:	deputy
nambardar	:	village functionary
nawab	:	honorific plural of naib; governor
nirguna	:	without characteristics, formless
PAC	:	Provincial Armed Constabulary
padyatra	:	foot-march
pagari	:	turban
pajama	:	loose trousers
panth	:	school of thought, sect
parampara	:	teacher-pupil chain, tradition
pradesh	:	state of the Indian Union
PUCL	:	People's Union for Civil Liberties
puja	:	devotional ritual
qaum	:	nation, community
raj	:	rule, British rule
Rajya Sabha	:	States' Assembly (upper house of Parliament,
selected via the State Assemblies)		
Ramzan	:	month of fasting for Muslims
RSS	:	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer
Corps)		
rath	:	chariot
rathyatra	:	chariot-march, procession
sadbhavana	:	goodwill
samiti	:	committee
sampradaya	:	sect
sanatana	:	eternal
Sanatana Dharma	:	philosophia perennis; Hinduism
sanskriti	:	culture
secularism	:	doctrine of separating state and religion
shuddhi	:	purification, (re-)entry into the Hindu fold
shudra	:	varna entrusted with serving
SS	:	Shiv Sena (Shiva's or Shivajis' Army)
suba	:	province
swaraj	:	self-rule, independence

out	tabligh	:	Islamic religious propaganda, especially to weed out non-Islamic practices among Muslims
	talaq	:	Muslim unilateral divorce
	thekedar	:	contractor
	tilak	:	mark on forehead
	tirth	:	ford; place of pilgrimage
	tirthankara	:	"ford-maker", Jain sage
and Oudh)	UP	:	Uttar Pradesh, formerly United Provinces (of Agra and Oudh)
	upajati	:	sub-caste
	vaishya	:	commoner, varna entrusted with trade
	varna	:	"colour", four function-wise groups in society
	vedi	:	altar
	Vidhan Sabha	:	Legislative Assembly of the states
	VHP	:	Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council)
	yajna (yagya)	:	sacrificial ritual
	zamindar	:	landlord
	zimmi	:	"protected one", non-Muslim tolerated in Muslim society

Appendix 1. Girilal Jain on Hindu Rashtra

Girilal Jain is one of the India's leading journalists. He was editor of the Times of India until 1989. After that, he did not really retire, but continues to function as one of India's most respected columnists. In these, he has taken an increasingly bold and outspoken stand in favor of the recognition of India as a Hindu Rashtra, as the political embodiment of Hindu civilization. Unlike the many who don't go beyond a petty criticism of the injustices done to Hindus, Mr. Jain draws attention to the configuration of the large historical forces at work.

I have included here two of his columns published in Sunday Mail (which have been honored with page full of reaction by Shankar Aiyar and P. Sainath), and an interview given to J. D. Singh and published in The Daily.

Limits of the Hindu Rashtra

The Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri dispute has brought to the fore the critical issue of the nature of the Indian state as nothing else has since partition and independence in 1947.

The secularist-versus-Hindu-Rashtra controversy is, of course, not new. In fact, it has been with us since the twenties when some of our forebears began to search for a definition of nationalism which could transcend at once the Hindu-Muslim divide and the aggregationist approach whereby India was regarded as a Hindu-Muslim-Sikh-Christian land. But it has acquired an intensity it has not had since partition.

This intensity is the result of a variety of factors which have cumulatively provoked intense anxiety among million of Hindus regarding their future

and simultaneously given a new sense of strength and confidence to the proponents of Hindu Rashtra. The first part of this story beings, in my view, with the mass conversion of Harijans to Islam in Meenakshipuram in Tamil Nadu in 1981. and travels via the rise of Pakistan-backed armed secessionist movements in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, and the second part with the spectacular success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the last polls to the Lok Sabha and State Vidhan Sabha. These details, however, need not detain us in a discussion on basic issues.

The basic issues, I need hardly add, are extremely complex; and judging by what has been written and spoken in recent months, they, I am afraid, are once again being simplified and sloganized. This is a pity in vies of the gravity of the situation we face and the nature of the stake we have in the outcome. I, therefore, wish to draw attention to what appear to me to be lacunae in the current and previous debates, and that too in a general fashion; for that alone is possible in this space.

In much of what I have read and heart on the subject, an awareness of the civilizational aspect of the problem has either been absent or warped, though its very mention should suffice to convince us that this is a matter if the greatest importance. India, to put the matter brusquely, has been a battleground between two civilizations (Hindu and Islamic) for well over a thousand years, and three (Hindu, Muslim and Western) for over two hundred years. None of them has ever won a decisive enough and durable enough victory to oblige the other two to assimilate themselves fully into it. So to the battle continues. This stalemate lies at the root of the crisis of identity the intelligentsia is incidentally not a monolithic entity. Though its constituents are not too clearly differentiated, they should broadly be divided into at least two groups.

The more resilient and upwardly mobile section of the intelligentsia must, by definition, seek to come to terms with the ruling power and its mores, and the less successful part of it to look for its roots and seek comfort in its culture past. This was so during the Muslim period; this was the case during the British Raj; and this rule has not ceased to operate since independence.

Thus in the medieval period of our history grew up a class of Hindus in and around centres of Muslim power who took to the Persian-Arabic culture and ways of the rules; similarly under the more securely founded and far better organized and managed Raj there arose a vast number of Hindus who took to the English language, Western ideas, ideals, dress and eating habits; many of these men came from the earlier Islamized groups, such as the Nehrus, for example; they, their progeny and other recruits to their class have continued to dominate independent India.

They are the self-proclaimed secularists who have sought, and continue to seek, to remark India in the Western image. The image has, of course, been an eclectic one; if they have stuck to the institutional framework inherited from the British, they have been more than willing to take up not only the Soviet model of economic development, but also the Soviet theories on a variety of issues such as the nationalities problem and the nature of imperialism and neo-colonialism.

Behind them has stood, and continues to stand, the awesome intellectual might of the West, which may or may not be anti- India, depending on the exigencies of its interest, but which has to be antipathetic to Hinduism in view of its non-Semitic character.

Some secularists may be genuinely pro-Muslim, as was Nehru, because they find high Islamic culture and the ornate Urdu language attractive. But, by and large, that is not the motivating force in their lives. They are driven, above all, by the fear of what they call regression into their own past which have come and continue to come understandably from the Left, understandably because no other group of Indians can possibly be so alienated from the country's culture past as the followers of Lenin, Stalin and Mao who have spared little effort to turn their own countries into culture wastelands.

As a group, the secularists, especially the Leftists, have not summoned the courage to insist that in order to ensure the survival of the secular India state, Muslims should accept one common civil code, and that Article 370 of the Constitution, which concedes special rights to Jammu and Kashmir mainly because it is a Muslim-majority state, should be scrapped. They have contented themselves with vague statements on the need for the

majorities to join the mainstream, never drawing attention to the twin fact that, of necessity, Hindus constitute the mainstream and that this mainstream is capable of respecting the identities and rights of the minorities, precisely because it is inclined to take note of the international aspect of Indian Islam.

Personally I have never been inclined to favour one common civil code. I regard such a demand as being Semitic in its inspection and spirit. A Hindu, in my view, can never wish to impose a code on a reluctant, in this case defiant, community. Even so I find it extraordinary that those who call themselves modernizers and secularists-the two terms are interchangeable-should shirk the logic of their philosophy of life.

A number of Indians have tried to define secularism as *sarva dharma samabhava* (equal respect for all religions). I cannot say whether they have been naive or clever in doing so. But the fact remains that secularism cannot admit of such an interpretation. In fact, orthodox Muslims are quite justified in regarding it as irreligious. Moreover, *dharma* cannot be defined as religion which is a Semitic concept and applies only to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Hinduism is not a religion in that sense; nor are Jainism and Buddhism, or for that matter, Taoism and Confucianism.

The state in independent India, has, it is true, sought, broadly speaking, to be neutral in the matter of religion. But this is a surface view of the reality. The Indian state has been far from neutral in civilizational terms. It has been an agency, and a powerful agency, for the spread of Western values and mores. It has willfully sought to replicate Western institutions, the Soviet Union too being essentially part of Western civilization. It could not be otherwise in view of the orientation and aspirations of the dominant elite of which Nehru remains the guiding spirit.

Muslims have found such a state acceptable principally on three counts. First, it has agreed to leave them alone in respect of their personal law (the *Shariat*) so much so that when the Supreme Court allowed a small alimony to a Muslim widow on the ground that she was indigent and therefore viable to become a vagrant, parliament enacted a law to overrule such interventions in the future. Secondly, it has allowed them to expand their traditional Quran-Hadith-based educational system in madrasahs attached to

mosques. Above all, it has helped them avoid the necessity to come to terms with Hindu civilization in a predominantly Hindu India. This last count is the crux of the matter.

I do not believe for a moment that a genuine Hindu-Muslim synthesis took place in India during the Moghul period, or that the British policy of divide-and-rule was solely, or even mainly, responsible for the Hindu-Muslim conflict under the Raj. Two caveats, however, need to be entered on these observations. First, after the beginning of the collapse of the Moghal empire with Aurangzeb's death in 1707, new power Hindu-Muslim co-existence and co-operation on terms less onerous for Hindus. Second, the very consolidation of British rule on an all-India basis led to a search by both Hindus and Muslims for self-definitions on the same all-India basis. This search led to a sharpening of the conflict between which the British exploited to their advantage.

Be that as it may, however, there is a basic point which has generally failed to attract the attention it deserves. Which is that a triangular contest is inherently not conducive to a stable alliance. So all equations (Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-British and Muslim-British) had to be unstable under the Raj; they were unstable. Each co-operated and clashed with the other two and each was also divided within itself. For example, just as Sir Sayyid Ahmed propagated the cause of co-operation with the British among fellow Muslims, the pan-Islamic sentiment began to spread among them on the Turkish question, inclining them finally to accept Gandhiji's leadership of the Khilafat movement in 1921. Gandhiji saw this triangular contest in civilizational terms. He juxtaposed all traditional civilizations against the modern scientific-technological civilization, which he called Satanic. Nehru saw the contest in economic terms. He juxtaposed the capitalist-imperialist and exploitative West against the exploited anti-imperialist East in which he included the Soviet Union.

Gandhiji sought Hindu-Muslim amity on the platform of essential unity of the two *religion* and Nehru on that of a common fight against *feudalism*, exploitation and poverty. Both approaches failed to produce the desired result; they had to fail. The two leaders tried to wish away the unresolved and stalemated civilizational conflict and they could not possibly succeed.

The nobility of their purpose, the intensity of their conviction and the Herculean nature of their effort could not prevail against the logic of history. The alternative to Partition would have been infinitely worse.

For the first time in a thousand years, Hindus got in 1947 an opportunity to resolve the civilizational issue in the only manner such issues can be resolved. History clearly of one civilization alone produces the necessary condition for the assimilation of another. The predominant culture too changes, as any student of the Arab conquests of Christian Syria and Egypt in the seventh century. would know. But that is how civilizations grow.

Hindus missed the opportunity, not so much because Nehru happened to be at the helm of affairs, as because they did not possess an elite capable of rising to the occasion. Indeed, Nehru himself was not an aberration. He was representative of the dominate elite which must not be equated with the Congress organizational leaders. The sweep and success of the campaign against Sardar Patel in 1947-48 should clinch the argument.

Hindus were just not in a position to assert the primacy of their civilization and they are still in no position to do so. The case for Hindu Rashtra rests on the failure of the Nehru model and its pull on the rise of a vast unprivileged intelligentsia, mobilization of vast masses as part of the democratic process and the modernization programme.

While a proper discussion of this question must wait, I would wish to add in conclusion that V.P. Singh and Mulayam Singh have rendered a yeoman's service to the cause of Hindu Rashtra, the former by splitting the *secularist* forces in the political realm, and the latter by showing Hindus how contemptuous and brutal the Indian state can be in its treatment of them.

[Sunday Mail, 2/12/1990]

The Harbinger of a New Order

A spectre haunts dominant sections of Indian's political and intellectual elites-the spectre of a growing Hindu self-awareness and self-assertion. Till

recently these elites had used the bogey of Hindu *communalism* and revivalism as a convenient device to keep themselves in power and to *legitimize* their slavish imitation of the West. Unfortunately for them, the ghost has now materialized.

Million of Hindus have stood up. It will not be easy to trick them back into acquiescing in an order which has been characterized not much by its *appeasement of Muslims* as by its alienness, rootlessness and contempt for the land's unique culture past. Secularism, a euphemism for irreligion and repudiation of the Hindu ethos, and socialism, an euphemism for denigration and humiliation of the business community to the benefit of ever expanding rapacious bureaucracy and politocracy, have been major planks of this order. Both have lost much of their old glitter and, therefore, capacity to dazzle and mislead. By the same token, re-Hinduization of the country's political domain has begun. On a surface view, it may be a sheer *accident* that the battle between aroused Hindus and the imitation Indian state, neutral to the restoration of the country's ancient civilization on its own oft-repeated admission, has been joined on the question of the Ram Janam-bhoomi temple in Rama's city of Ayodhya. But the historic significance of this *accident* should be evident to anyone familiar with Rama's place in our historic consciousness.

Rama has been exemplar par excellence for the Hindu public domain. There have been other incarnations of Vishnu in the Hindu view and the tenth (the Kalki avatar) is yet to arrive. But there has been no other similar exemplar for Hindu polity. In historic terms, therefore, the proposed temple can be the first step towards that goal. The proper English translation of Hindu Rashtra would be Hindu polity and not Hindu nation.

The concept of nation itself is, in fact, alien to the Hindu temperament and genius. It is essentially Semitic in character, even if it arose in Western Europe in the eighteenth century when it had successfully shaken off the Church's stranglehold. For, like Christianity and Islam, it too emphasizes the exclusion of those who do not belong to the charmed circle (territorial, or linguistic, or ethnic) as much as it emphasizes the inclusion of those who fall within the circle. Indeed, the former, like the heretics and pagans in Christianity and Islam, are cast into outer darkness.

Two other points may be made in this connection, though only parenthetically. First, the nation could become the new icon and wars between nations replace religious (sectarian) wars in Western Europe precisely because it was a secularized version of Christian and sectarian exclusivism. Second, the Western European imperialist expansion into pagan lands was not unrelated to the spirit of heresy hunting from the very beginning of the Christian enterprise.

Spaniards and the Portuguese made no bones about it. They went about the task of destroying pagan temples and converting the peoples they conquered with a ruthlessness perhaps without a parallel in human history. Latin America bears witness to the earnestness and thoroughness of the Spanish-Portuguese Christian *soul-rescue* mission.

The British and the French took a different route to the same goal of decimation of other cultures. They sought not so much blessed with the light, compassion and love of God's own son Christ, as to introduce these *victims of primitive animism superstition, idolatory and female irrationalism* to the world- ordering masculine rationality of the West. They too did as thorough a job of under-mining pagan civilization as their Spanish and Portuguese predecessors. The continued adherence to the concept of nationalism and secularism of our elites are evidence of the success of the British in our case.

Obviously, I am calling into question the conceptual capital of the dominant elites. Equally obviously, I cannot deal with the issues I am raising even in the telegraphic language. But, fortunately, an American anthropologist, Ronal Inden, has written a book entitled *Imagining India* (Basil Blackwell) exposing the distortions our heritage has suffered in interpretations by Western orientalists, whether materialists (British and French) or idealists (Germans). He has not discussed how Western-education Indians have swallowed lock, stock and barrel these distorted interpretations of our past. But that should become obvious once we become aware of the misrepresentations. The book available in Delhi.

To return to the issue under discussion, Hindus are not a community; they cannot become a community. This fact has less to do with the caste system even in this present degenerate form than with the essential spirit of

Hinduism which is inclusivist and not exclusivist by definition. Such a spirit must seek to abolish and not build boundaries. Manava-dharma must come before swa-dharma in the hierarchy of our values. That is why I have said again and again that Hindus cannot sustain an anti-Muslim feeling except temporarily and that too under provocation. The provocation may not come directly from Muslims. But that is a different proposition not under discussion in this piece.

Hindus have been compelled to recognize boundaries, as towards the end of tenth century when Eastern Afghanistan fell to Muslim Turks after a valiant struggle by shaivite princes lasting over three centuries and their access to Central Asia was effectively blocked as a prelude to the invasion of Bharat Varsha itself by Afghans converted to Islam (for details of the struggle see Andre Wink's *Al Hind*, Oxford University press). And they are obliged to recognize frontiers now even within the sub-continent which has been the heartland of their civilization. But that limitation cannot make them into a nation.

Hindus are not a nation in being or becoming. They cannot be, not because of the illiterate view that they are divided on the basis of caste and language but of the deep and profound truth that they have been and are meant to be a civilization. A civilization must, by definition, seek to be universal. Of the great civilizations, China alone has been an exception to this rule. That has been so because Chinese civilization alone has been based on, and has derived sustenance from, the ethnic unity of its populace.

It is this approach that I had in my mind when I wrote the article entitled "*Rama and not temples is the issue*" in his journal on November 4, though I took have been obliged since to speak of *Hindu* nation in order to bring out the absurdity of the Indian concept of secular nationalism which its proponents treat as being culturally neutral. As such I find it painful that even well-meaning Hindus should make a distinction between Hindu culture-civilization and Hindu religion, little realizing that Hinduism is not a religion, and say that Rama was both a cultural hero and a religious figure as if he can be so split. No, he epitomizes our civilization in its totality.

The construction of the proposed temples in the city of his birth, as we know it from Ramayana which, much more than the Maharashtra, has

shaped the Hindu world view at least in this millennium of deep trouble and continuous struggle against foreign inroads, cannot symbolize the return of Rama as such. But it can mark the beginning of the process which must in the nature of things be prolonged and painful.

The Hindu fight is not at all with Muslim; the fight is between Hindus anxious to renew themselves in the spirit of their civilization, and the state, Indian in name and not in spirit and the political and intellectual class trapped in the debris the British managed to bury us under before they left. The proponents of the Western ideology are using Muslims as auxiliaries and it is a pity Muslim *leaders* are allowing themselves to be so used. Developments in this regard have, however, not been without a positive aspect since 1986 when the padlock on the gate to the structure known as the Babri mosque were opened and Rama Lala (child Rama) which was already installed at the site sanctified by tradition as the place of Rama's birth. On the contrary, it can be argued that in the absence of opposition by the state and Muslim *leaders* the necessary task of mobilizing Hindus would have got neglected, with adverse consequences in the long term. Proponents of a Hindu order have reason to be particularly grateful to the U.P. chief Minister, Mulayam Singh, who on October 30 and November 2 gave Ram bhaktas an opportunity to prove that they could withstand a mass massacre. That is how instruments for fulfillment of historic destiny are forged. In the past up to the sixteenth century, great temples have been built in our country by rulers to mark the rise of a new dynasty and/or to mark a triumph which they have regarded as vindication of their claim to the Chakravarti status. In the present case, the proposal to build the Rama temple has also to help produce an *army* which can in the first instance achieve the victory the construction can proclaim.

The raising of such an *army* in our democracy, however flawed, involves not a body of disciplined cadres, which is available in the shape of the RSS, a political organization, which too is available in the Bharatiya Janata Party, but also an aroused citizenry. That had so far been missing. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad and its allies have fulfilled this need in a manner which is truly spectacular.

So long as this task of mobilizing support continues, delay in the actual construction of the proposed temples need not be a cause for concern. That can well await the arrival of a Hindu government in New Delhi. Indeed, it would be in order to build the temple then. It can appropriately herald the dawn of a new order.

I am in no position to say whether the mobilization programme has been flawed because the organizers have not taken adequate precautions to ensure that it is not allowed to acquire anti- Muslim overtones, or whether that was unavoidable on account of V.P. Singh's duplicity and Mulayam Singh's desperate search for power on the strength of the Muslim card. Indeed, I must confess that the top BJP leaders, especially L.K. Advani, could not have been more careful; they spelt it out day after day that they were not guided by anti-Muslim bias. Even so, no effort should be spared in future to avoid the risk of Hindu-Muslim clashes.

The BJP-VHP-RSS leaders have rendered the country another greater service. They have brought Hindu interests, if not the Hindu ethos, into the public domain where they legitimately belong. But it would appear that they have not fully grasped the implications of their action. Their talk of pseudo-secularism gives me that feeling. The fight is not against what they call pseudo- secularism; it is against secularism in its proper definition whereby man as animal usurps the place of man as spirit. The concept of man as an economic being is a complement to the secular man.

In the existing West-dominated political-intellectual milieu, it is understandable that BJP leaders act defensively. But it is time they recognize that defensiveness can cripple them, as it did in the past when they sought respectability in claimed adherence to Gandhian socialism, whatever it might mean, and this time in a context favourable to them. The Nehru order is as much in the throes of death as its progenitor, the Marxist-Leninist- stalinist order. A new order is waiting to be conceived and born. It needs a mother as well as a mid-wife.

[Sunday Mail, 9/12/1990]

This is Hindu India

Giri, would you define the India of your dreams?

First, let me tell you I am not a dreamer. I am not a utopian. I am an analyst. I analyze the correlation of forces and make certain assessments on that basis. You would never have seen a statement by me which is not backed by analysis of forces in play.

I do not have a vision of Hindu India. I certainly do not have a blueprint for Hindu India. What I see is the disintegration of the existing order, then I try to analyze the reasons responsible for it and indicate a possible solution, or, to put it differently, an alternative model of development which may hopefully turn out to be more viable and healthier.

What are these forces ?

It is for instance, sheer escapism on our part to believe that the Hindu-Muslim problem is of a recent origin, or that it is solely the product of the British policy of divide and rule. This is a thousand-year-old civilizational problem which has not been resolved. In the seventh century Islam arose in Arabia and expanded rapidly in the West, reaching up to the Mediterranean and beyond within a hundred years and the north conquering Persia and then, Central Asia. It moved into India with far greater difficulty. The resistance was formidable and continuous.

Most people who comment on these matters have no idea that Shaivite kings, backed by Buddhists, resisted the Islamic onslaught in eastern Afghanistan, which was then part of India for close to four hundred years. It was only in the last part of the tenth century that the Ghaznavid kingdom was established there.

Similarly, most people have no idea of the resistance Muslims met on the Makran coast which was also an integral part of India. But this is all by way of information. The central point is that Muslim rule could never be fully consolidated in India. Muslim rulers remained for most part like military garrisons.

I am not taking a moralistic position either on the fact of the Muslim attacks or on the fact of Hindu resistance. I am stating these facts as a student of history.

Incidentally, while the Muslim occupation of Sind took place in the eighth century with Mohammed bin Qasim, up to the 11th century there was very little conversion in Sind. The resistance was very tough and Muslims had to come to terms with local centres. But all this is also incidental to my argument.

Conversion, however, took place in India on a mass scale from the time of the Sultanate till the end of the 17th century under Aurangzeb ; the Muslim population multiplied for a variety of reasons. The people captured in war were, for example, given the option of being killed or converted. You will appreciate that most of them agreed to get converted. Similarly, like all invaders in that period, Muslims took women as prisoners and distributed them among soldiers. So they produced children who helped swell the Muslim population. But in spite of all that, the Muslim population did not exceed 25 per cent of the population on the subcontinent at any time.

My difference with most contemporary writers on the subject arises from their perception that a Hindu-Muslim synthesis took place and a new civilization, or a new culture, which could be called Into-Muslim, arose. In my opinion, nothing of that kind happened on a significant scale.

To begin with, it needs to be emphasized that Muslims themselves were broadly divided into two categories - the foreigners and their descendants who constituted the ruling elite, and those who were converted or born of Indian parents. The social status of these people remained more or less what it was at the time of conversion.

This is in spite of the fact Islam believes in equality?

The Islamic claim to equality is not false. All Muslims pray together in a mosque. There is no gradation. But Islam could not possibly overcome social stratification and ethnic distinctions.

Not only in India but also abroad?

The Arabs, for example, continue to regard themselves as superior to Muslims elsewhere even today by virtue of being the people of Mohammed. To return to the issue of Hindu-Muslim synthesis, however, only a small group of Hindus took to Persian culture and language in and around the Muslim courts. Only this small crust at the top took to what we may, for the sake of brevity, call the Muslim way of life, though they also continued to practice the old rituals at home and avoid social contacts, like eating together with Muslims. The most prominent groups among them were the Kayasthas of UP and Bihar and the Kashmiri pandits who had migrated to north India.

At the other end of the spectrum, ordinary converted Muslims remained close to the Hindus in their way of life. The best illustration of this fact is that even as late as the last part of the 19th century in Bengal, many Muslims kept Hindu names and at the time of the 1871 census no one knew, or suspected, that Muslims constituted a majority in Bengal.

Every single Islamic concept in Bengal had to be explained to Muslims there in terms of Hindu concepts and practices, so much so, that the prophet himself was represented as an incarnation of Vishnu. There is substantial literature on the subject which shows that Muslims were indistinguishable from Hindus for all practical purposes. Finally, a kind of situation was reached where at the top you had Islamized groups among Hindus and just below that, you had more or less Hinduized groups among Muslims and you can say that a kind of coexistence prevailed. With the decline of the Mughal empire the country broke up into different kingdoms whose rulers were neither capable of, or interested in, imposing their way of life on people of the other faith.

My other point of departure with most of my fellow commentators is that they assume unity of all religions as given. There is, of course, a transcendental unity of all faiths. But that transcendental unity is, for practical purposes, less significant than the differences in religious forms. The difference of form is extremely important. Along with it, comes the difference of culture. Now there is a world of difference

between what Western scholars call natural religions, that is religions which have grown over hundreds of years in a natural way, and prophetic religions. There is a world of difference between the Semitic spirit and the Hindu-Buddhist-Jain spirit, that is the Indian spirit.

The Semitic spirit is informed by an earnestness and a single-mindedness which are wholly absent in the Indian spirit. The Semitic spirit is intolerant and insistent on the pursuit of a particular course, whereas the Indian spirit is a broadminded and tolerant one. To say therefore that Ram and Rahim are the same is, in my opinion, a form of escapism or make-believe.

There is no concept, for example, in Hinduism of kafir. You cannot be a kafir in Hinduism. You do not cease to be a Hindu whatever you do, unless you choose to get converted to another religion. You can be a Buddhist and a Hindu at the same time, not only in a social sense but also in religious terms. I do not know what would have happened if the British had not come. Probably, adjustments at the local or regional level could have taken place and a new kind of reality might have emerged.

You talk of adjustments, not assimilation ?

Assimilation is possible only if one civilization prevails over the other. Assimilation is not neutral. For example, Syria was a major Christian centre before the rise of prophet Mohammed. When the Arabs conquered Syria, Christianity was, however, on the decline. As one writer has put it, there was a lot of cultural property lying around waiting for somebody to take it over and give it a new shape and life. Islam provided the form in which the old content was absorbed and reshaped. That is assimilation.

Assimilation in India is treated as if it is a neutral concept, which it is not. Assimilation is critically dependent on the predominance of the form over the other. As a result of assimilation, the dominant culture also changes its shape and its character. But broadly speaking, it retains more of its old form, content and spirit than the other which is absorbed. In India such a situation has not arisen.

Can one speculate that if the British had not come the adjustment Would have been smoother ?

Although Muslim power weakened and disintegrated after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, nothing like a composite Hindu power emerged. The two dominant groups, Sikhs in the north and Marathas in the west, did not show the capacity to prevail on an all-India scale. The failure of the Marathas was more significant than that of the Sighs. Sikhs were a small community but Marathas possessed the necessary numbers. They ranged all over the country at one stage. But they could not establish a kind of predominance which could have held out promised of Hindu triumph.

As the British power got consolidated, local adjustments also began to be subordinated to the urge for larger unity. Hindus began to define themselves in pan-Indian terms and Muslims in pan-Islamic terms. By this logic, I would regard partition not only inevitable but desirable. Many would share this view.

In the wake of partition, the India that emerged could not, in a sense, but be Hindu India because, for all effective purpose, the Muslim component of state power moved to Pakistan. The army was partitioned along religious and communal lines. The police was partitioned along the same lines. The bureaucracy was partitioned and much of the top crust of the Muslim elite migrated to Pakistan from various parts of India. This reality however, we refused to recognize.

What would this recognition have implied ?

Recognition would have meant, first of all, an assurance to Hindus that they had at long last come into their own. The Indian elite has spent the last 43 years in trying to convince Hindus that they have not come into their own. That has not been the intention but that has been the result. This recognition should have been made like in the case of Arab nationalism. No Arab nationalist will, for instance, refuse to recognize the fact that this nationalism is underscored by its commitment to Islam. Even Christian Arabs recognize this to be the case. If we had owned the India that emerged as a result of partition as a Hindu India,

then a new process of adjustment could have taken place which, in my opinion, would have been far healthier.

Was failure of leadership responsible for it in some measure? The dominant Hindu intelligentsia is the product of the Macaulay school of education. It has got alienated from its own roots. It has to an extent lost its sense of identity. It is anxious to join the Western world even if as a very junior partner. It thinks mainly in Western terms. Its conceptual equipment and intellectual baggage is wholly Western in its origin. Such an intelligentsia could not and cannot possibly recognize the reality.

Was it not possible for the leadership to give a different kind of orientation ?

If any Congress leader other than Nehru had been the first prime minister of India, a movement in that direction Might have taken place. If, for instance, Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad or C. Rajagopalachari were at the helm, the orientation would surely have been more sympathetic to the aspirations of ordinary Hindus. Nehru was quite alien to the world of Hinduism. In reality, he had a contempt for popular Hinduism'. His autobiography and his *Discovery of India* can leave no score for doubt on that score. But the very fact that Nehru was popular and he remained prime minister, even after the debacle in 1962 at the hands of china, would show there was widespread sentiment in favour of his policy.

I would not be able to say whether it was more the result of his talk of socialism than of his talk of secularism. As far as I know, Nehru never defined secularism in its proper European and historical context.

The Muslim community as a whole was very glad that India had not declared itself a Hindu republic and had set out to become a *secular* republic. This was possibly the result of two undercurrents of thought. First, judging by their own attitude to other religions, they could well have believed that a self- confessed Hindu India would be intolerant of their faith. Secondly, even those who remained here had good reasons to feel that as a result of this policy of secularism, combined with the pursuit of democracy, they would have a better chance of getting a

share in power than they would have in Hindu India. Again a misconception.

But while they welcomed the commitment of the state to secularism, they were not prepared to take to secularism themselves. For example, at no stage have Muslims shown the slightest inclination to accept one common civil code. There has also been a tremendous expansion in the traditional Quranbased education in madrasas attached to mosques, since independence. Their commitment to the shariat has remained unshaken.

I must emphasize at this point, that I do not criticize Muslims on these counts. I regard it as the right of Muslims to stick to the shariat. As such, I am not opposed to their opposition to one common civil code. I do not believe in imposing such a code. I do not believe in imposing such a code on a reluctant minority.

Has uniformity no merit?

Uniformity has no place in the Hindu view of life. Also, Hindus do not believe in abstract laws and abstract principles. Both these are the products of Europeans.

Would not lack of it encourage separatism?

By itself it would not encourage separatism. What encourages separatism is our refusal to recognise that Muslims are different. They have, of course, their rights as citizens which they exercise. They have every opportunity to raise in life. But that can be possible only when they conform to the general atmosphere and ethos. After all, you cannot become a professor in a university unless you acquire the same kind of knowledge as your Hindu counterparts. You cannot be a top bureaucrat, or a general, unless you grow up in the same discipline and speak the same language, at least in the public domain. The confusion has arisen because their distinctness is not recognized.

Again, in my view, nation-building is not a hopeless enterprise in India. May I point out in this connection that a vast majority of Muslims have for 200 years or more, refused to Shah Wali Ullah in the early part of the 18th century till today, that is for nearly 300 years, and especially since the rise of Al-Wahab in Saudi Arabia and the

spread of his influence in India in the 19th century, there has been a persistent campaign to rid Indian Islam of saint worship and so-called Hindu accretions and influences. But, by and large, ordinary Muslims have stuck to saint worship as a visit to any important durgah would show. So there has been a potentiality for the rise of an Indian Islam, provided power equations were clearly understood.

By *Indian Islam* do you mean a modified version of Islam? No. Most Hindus have not tried to understand what is Islam. As in Christianity for 600 years, there were major dissent movements in Islam for 300 years, particularly the powerful sufi movement, emanating from Iran with its Zoroastrian background, and Central Asia with its Shamanistic-Buddhist background. It is interesting that the powerful sufi movement arose not in the heartland of Islam but on the periphery of the world of Islam. When the juridical approach finally triumphed in the 10th century, something like a Muslim creed emerged. Islam was frozen in its present shape in the 11th-12th century.

Let me make another point which is not too well remembered in this country. This is that all idolatrous practices against which Mohammed fought in the seventh century were prevalent at the time of rise of Al-Wahab in Saudi Arabia in the 19th century. The sayings and activities of the prophet; polytheism could not be eliminated even in Arabia, the birthplace of Islam. Such is the power of this phenomenon. To say that an Indian Islam would have differed from the pristine from is Islam will thus be only partially valid. There is just no pristine Islam, whatever Muslim might say and believe. However, an Islam broader in its vision and more tolerant in its spirit could have arisen if the power equations were made explicit.

But this did not happen even in the Central Asian republics in the Soviet Union.

The Central Asian republics example is not valid in our case because the Russians tried to exterminate Islam. Extermination never succeeds. Incidentally, it should be noted that the revival of Islam has taken place in Central Asia not through orthodox ulemas but through the Sufi

brotherhoods. Thus, in a sense, the pre-Islamic tradition is asserting itself in Central Asia. Incidentally, the Shia search for spiritual life can also be traced back to Zoroastrianism.

Two other developments took place which worked against assimilation. I am not against Urdu. But Urdu makes a departure from what was called Hindvi with the imposition on that growing language of Persian and Arabia words and concepts. Urdu in its grammar and in respect of the roots of most of its vocabulary, is not different from Hindi. When the Persianization and Arabization of Hindi began, the Sanskritization of Hindi also began.

At the time of partition or soon after partition, Nehru divided the problem of Muslims in two parts: one of containing Pakistan and the other of accommodating Muslims and restoring their confidence in the economic-political set-up of India. The containment of Pakistan required that on the world stage we aligned ourselves with the more powerful of the two blocs, the Western bloc. In the very act of not doing so, he made sure that Pakistan would not be effectively contained. The Kashmir crisis is thus primarily his *gift* to the country.

He also failed to understand that we could not allow continued proselytization and conversion except at the grave risk of hurting the Hindus psyche. The result is there for anyone to see. I for one regard Meenakshipuram as a very critical and dangerous development. After the mass conversion of Harijans to Islam came the trouble in Punjab. It was followed by the rise of revivalism and fundamentalism in Kashmir, though it fully exploded in our face only in 1989-90. All in all, the impression began to grow among Hindus that they were besieged in their own country.

Is the Ram temple issue a reaction to it?

The VHP is closely linked with the RSS. It would be dishonest to deny that link. But the popular appeal it has made has very much to do with the prevalence of the siege psychology among Hindus. The idea that the Allahabad High Court can settle the issue I regard as irresponsible. Courts cannot settle such questions. There are *historians* who raise such absurd questions as whether Ram was ever born, whether he was a

historical figure, whether Ayodhya was his city. All this is irrelevant and worse.

Two facts are important in this regard. First, for several centuries there has been a struggle over that site. Hindus have been one in regarding that site as holy. The chabootra adjoining the mosque where prayers and worship have been going on ever since, was allowed to be constructed by Akbar. From the 16th century this has been a live issue. Those who raise the question of whether a temple existed or not, are not aware of the dangerous implications of what they are saying. For there is no dearth of mosques in India which stand at temple sites.

Second, Muslims believe in fighting idolatry. It has been an article of faith for them to destroy idols. They have lived according to their perception of the faith. By modern criteria, it may have been wrong, but by the criteria of the day, it was not wrong. Nor can all these wrongs be set right. They are important symbols which cannot be disregarded. Ram is by far the most important symbol of Hindu identity. For anyone to raise this kind of issue in respect of what millions of Hindus regard as Janmabhoomi of Ram is to ask for trouble. The issue would have been settled long ago if politicians had not intervened in the manner they have.

It is extraordinary that a man like Mulayam Singh who otherwise has shown scant respect for court judgments should swear by the court in this case. It is also extraordinary that V.P.Singh should speak one language in private and another in public. I have the same feeling about Rajiv Gandhi. These people have played politics of a dangerous variety.

What solution have you to offer?

The least Hindus need is a symbolic victory. The Babri mosque does not exist. A structure exists which is called a mosque. Equally important, it can never be a mosque again. Muslim shall not pray there ever again. So it is defunct. The issue is not whether the mosque should stay or not. The issue is whether Hindus are allowed to build the temple. But I do not really believe that Muslim activists are going to compromise on this question. So I think this conflict will continue.

How do you see the communal issue in its larger perspective?

I don't take such a pessimistic view of this problem as many others do. I do not believe that we are in anything like the 1946-47 situation. Communal riots have taken place and more riots may take place. But I see the situation differently. I see it in terms of a redefinition of Indian politics of which this controversy has become a major instrument.

My assessment falls into two parts. First, the existing order is in a pretty bad shape. It is not only that one-tenth of members of Parliament have formed the government. It is not only that horse trading has taken place, in new Delhi, Ahmedabad, Patna and Lucknow. There has been a general decline in the quality of our democracy.

Indeed, our slogans no longer keep pace with reality. For the past 20 years, money earned through smuggling, bootlegging and muscle power have been significant factors influencing the course of elections. And yet all the time we have talked of the nexus between politics and big business. I am not suggesting that big business does not have any influence on politics in a subterranean manner. I am suggesting a new element has entered the situation, which is called criminalization of politics. In U.P. and Bihar a large number of MLAs have criminal records. The crimes include charges of murder. Mafia dons have become extremely influential. I for one, am not surprised at this development. But that is another story.

As of the other pillars of our system - secularism and socialism - the communal situation is precarious and nothing more need be said about it. And socialism, as is well known, has produced a parallel black money economy of unprecedented proportions. I do not see any signs of improvement in that situation. One reason for all these developments is the denigration by the power elites of traditional mores. Everyone knows that religion has been the most important restraining influence on our appetites. Our appetites have now been unleashed, and we have set for ourselves the American model where consumerism is the ideology.

In view of the decay of the present political order, the struggle for the rise of a new order is unavoidable. In my opinion, the BJP represents the wave of the future precisely because it emphasizes the link between religion and politics. That is why I attach a great deal of importance to the activities of the BJP.

Whatever else the RSS may have done, nobody can suggest that its members have ever engaged in anti-social activities. Nobody can deny that they are a very disciplined group. If the BJP gains access to power it would have to defer in a big way to the RSS cadres who are highly motivated, patriotic and disciplined. So we can get a new kind of policy.

But the BJP stands isolated today and is confined to the Hindi heartland.

No, the BJP is no longer confined to the Hindi belt. The RSS has a presence throughout the country. In western India, the BJP itself is quite strong. There is widespread speculation that if an election is held tomorrow, the BJP would sweep in Gujarat and do reasonably well in Maharashtra. The main check on the BJP in Maharashtra is the personality of Sharad Pawar. In Tamil Nadu, Hindu organizations are beginning to do well. In Karnataka, the BJP is gaining in influence. In north India, its presence is quite strong. The next place where it will consolidate itself will be U.P., epicenter of the Mandir-Masjid storm.

That the BJP is isolated among the established political organizations and the Westernized intellectual elite is not only logical in view of what I have said but also desirable. It is logical because all other parties, including the Congress, represent the status quo; the BJP alone stands for a new order which is rooted in the country's cultural past. And it is a desirable one, that it helps avoid an erosion, as in the past, of the BJP's identity, commitment and programme.

[The Daily, 23/12/1990, with J.D.Singh]

Appendix 2. Ram Swarup on Indian Secularism

I gladly leave the last word to Ram Swarup. By way of introduction, let me quote the first part of Arun Shourie's article Fomenting reaction, concerning the ban on the Hindi translation of Ram Swarup's book understanding Islam through Hadis:

Ram Swarup, now in his seventies, is a scholar of the first rank. In the 1950's when our intellectuals were singing paeans to Marxism and to Mao in particular, he wrote critiques of communism and of the actual-that is, dismal - performance of communist governments. He showed that the *sacrifices* which the people were being compelled to make, had nothing to do with building a new society in which at some future date they would be the heirs of milk and honey. On the contrary, the *sacrifices* were nothing but the results of terrorism, pure and simple- of state terrorism, to use the expression our progressive use for all governments save the governments which have used it most brutally and most extensively. And that this terror was being deployed for one reason alone: to ensure total dominance, and that in perpetuity, for the narrowest of oligarchies. He showed that the claims to efficiency and productivity, to equitable distribution and to high morale which were being made by these governments, and even more so by their apologists and propagandists in countries such as India, were wholly unsustainable, that in fact they were fabrications.

Today, anyone reading those critiques would characterize them as prophetic. But thirty years ago so noxious was the intellectual climate in India that all he got was abuse, and ostracism. *"His work of Hinduism and on Islam and Christianity has been equally scholarly. And what is more pertinent to the point I want to urge, it has been equally prophetic. No one has ever refuted him on facts, but many have sought to smear him and his writing. They have thereby transmuted his work from mere scholarship into warning"*.

The country's political atmosphere is rent with anti communal slogans. There are deafening warnings against the threat to India's *secularism*. Everywhere there is a gushing love for the minorities and a hearty condemnation of the forces of communalism as incarnated in the VHP, the RSS and the BJP. The parties and personalities who not long ago opposed India's struggle for freedom and unity are fully in the campaign. The Left intellectuals who dominate the media lead the Chorus; Muslim fundamentalism provides the political sinews and the street strength; that section of the press which had British connections (like the Statesman and the Times of India) is still carrying on the old tradition either out of habit or old loyalty or for sheer consistency.

The warnings against communalism are not new. They have a familiar feature of the post-independence period. They have been sounded partly to keep the warners in form, and partly because they have been the stock-in-trade of slick intellectuals in search of a progressive image and of skillful politicians in search of easy votes. But this time one also notices a new urgency and shrillness in the alarm bells. It seems it is no longer a put-up affair and the warners feel really endangered. It also appears that this time the danger is not felt to be against the Muslims- their adopted ward- but against themselves. For what has begun to be attacked is not Muslim fundamentalism but pseudo-secularism itself. A great threat indeed to those secularist-communists in India whose model show-piece in Europe is in ruins and whose ideology and the very way of thinking are under great questioning.

Though borrowed from the West, secularism in India served a different end. In the West, it was directed against the clergy, tyrannical rulers, and had therefore a liberating role; in India, it was designed and actually used by Macaulayites to keep down the Hindus, the victims of two successive imperialisms expending over a thousand years. In the West, it opposed the Church which claimed to be the sole custodian of truth, which took upon itself the responsibility of dictating science and ordering thought, which decided when the world was created, whether the earth is flat or round, whether the sun or the earth moves round the other, which gave definitive conclusions on all matters and punished dissent. But in India, secularism was directed against Hinduism which made no such claims,

which laid down no dogmas and punished no dissent, which fully accepted the role of reason and unhampered inquiry in all matters, spiritual and secular; which encouraged viewing things from multiple angles - Syadvada (for which there is no true English word)³²³ was only a part of this larger speculative and venturesome approach.

There is yet another difference. In the West, the struggle for secularism called for sacrifice and suffering-remember the imprisonments, the stakes, the Index; remember the condemnation of Galileo; remember how Bruno, Lucilio Vanini, Francis Kett, Bartholomew Legate, Wightman and others were burnt at the stake. But in India secularism has been a part of the Establishment, first of the British and then of our own self-alienated rulers. It has been used against Hinduism which has nourished a great spirit and culture of tolerance, free inquiry and intellectual ³²³. Syadvada literally means *perhaps-ism*. Approximate translations could be *cognitive [as opposed to moral] relativism, viewpointly pluralism*. The dictionary translations

and spiritual integrity. Such a culture deserves to be honoured and owned and cherished by its inheritors, but unfortunately under a great misconception it is held in odium and it is being denied and disowned by a self-forgetful nation. Secularism has become a name for showing one's distance from this great religion and culture. Macaulayites and Marxists also use it for Hindu- baiting.

Now turning away from this larger aspect and looking at it in its present context, we find that secularism is quite a profitable business. Even more than patriotism, it has become a refuge of many shady characters of various descriptions Ambitious politicians resort to it for vote-catching; intellectuals, many of them not too intellectual, use it for self-aggrandizement . But the slogan has been so often used that it has become hackneyed; and considering the contexts in which it is used, it also sounds hypocritical; by a too reckless use, it has even lost its abusive power.

Religious harmony is a desirable thing. But it takes two to play the game. Unfortunately such a sentiment holds a low position in Islamic theology. The situation is made more complicated by certain historical factors into

which we need not go here. The immediately preceding British period added its own difficulty. More than the policy of *divide and rule*, the British followed another favourite policy, the policy of creating privileged enclaves and ruling the masses with the help of those policies were embraced in their fullness by our new rulers-the rules of the game did not change simple because the British left. They have a vested interest in consolidated minorities and minorityism. Consolidated minorities can be used against a notional majority which can be further fragmented and rendered powerless a la Mandalisation and other such devices.

In his book *My Eleven Years With Fakhruddin Ahmad*, Mr. Fazle Ahmed Rehmany quotes an incident which throws interesting light on the psychology of secularism and its need to keep Muslims in isolation and in a sort of protective custody. During the Emergency period, some followers of the jama'at-e-Islami found themselves in the same jail as the members of RSS; here they began to discover that the latter were no monsters as described by the *nationalist* and secularist propaganda. Therefore they began to think better of the Hindus. This alarmed the secularists and the interested Maulvis. Some Maulvis belonging to the Jama'at-ul-Ulema-i-Hind met President Fakhruddin Ahmad, and reported to him about the growing rapport between the members of the two communities. This *stunned* the President and he said that this boded an *ominous future for Congress Muslim leaders*, and he promised that "*he would speak to Indiraji about this dangerous development and ensure that Muslims remain Muslims.*" Different political parties have a vested interest in Muslims retaining their Hindu phobia. This phobia is a treasure trove of votes for them-or, at least, this is what they believe. It is unfortunate that the Muslims have not thrown up leaders who stop playing the anti-Hindu game of some Hindus. It can bring no religious amity. What Islam needs is an introspective leadership, a leadership which is prepared to have a fresh look at its traditional doctrines and approaches. It must give up its religious arrogance and its fundamentalism, its basic categories of believers and infidels, its imperialist theories of Zimmis and Jizya, its belief that it has appeared with a divine mission to replace all other religions and modes or worship.

[Published with some editing in Indian Express, 2/1/1991]

Notes:

1. Published by Voice of India, Delhi 1990. So far the only book by a non-Indian on the Ayodhya controversy.□ 2. See the authoritative articles by B.B. Lal (Manthan, 10/1990) and S.P. Gupta (Indian Express, 2/12/1990), and annexure 28 to the VHP document Evidence for the Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir.□ 3. The Political Abuse of History : Babri Masjid / Rama Janmabhoomi Dispute, published by the Centre for Historical Studies of Jawaharlal Nehru University, and in Times of India, 6/11/89.□ 4. Ram Janmabhoomi : Muslim Testimony, published in the Lucknow edition of The Pioneer, 5/2/90, and slightly modified in Indian Express, 26/02/90.□ 5. Indian Express, 27/3/90. After that, more evidence has come to light including a text by Aurangzeb's granddaughter from the early 18th century, and one by a local Qazi from 1735 (see the VHP document Evidence for the Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir, ch.3). But at least the testimony presented by A.K. Chatterjee and by Harsh Narain was known to the pro-Babri polemicists since spring 1990.□ 6. see Harsh Narain : op.cit., and Arun Shourie : Hideaway Communalism, published as ch.13 of his Religion in Politics (Roli Books, Delhi 1989); both included in Hindu Temples : What Happened to Them (Voice of India, Delhi 1990).□ 7. In her book : The Secular Emperor Babar, Lokgeet Prakashan, Sirhind 1977 ; dealt with in ch.1.7. of my Ram Janmabhoomi vs. Babri Masjid.□ 8. The Ayodhya Controversy : Where Lies the Truth?, published as ch.3 of A.A. Engineer (ed.); Babri Masjid Ram Janmabhoomi Controversy (Delhi 1990). Worked out more fully in Sushil Srivastava : The Disputed Mosque. Vistaar Publ., Delhi 1991. A long excerpt was published in Sunday, 6/1/1991.□ 9. This refusal to face both the relevant archaeological and documentary evidence to date certainly counts for the JNU historians, R.S. Sharma, Gyanendra Pandey, and most secularist journalists. Syed Shahabuddin has made a few unconvincing attempts to discredit a small part of the documentary evidence. Gyanendra Pandey's book The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India (Oxford University Press 1990), dealing with nearby Varanasi in just the period when the British are alleged to have launched the Ram Janmabhoomi rumour, doesn't give any indication that the British constructed such rumours (let alone communalism). A.A. Engineer makes a

distinction, in the introduction to his op.cit., p.7., between the belief that Mohammed was born (history) and the belief that he was the Prophet (theology). But, taking Jesus as a better illustration, there is apart from the belief that he was born and the belief that he was the Saviour, also the popular belief that he was born in a stable in Bethlehem, which is till today a Christian place of pilgrimages, protected by the Israeli government : this belief is neither a matter of history nor of theology.□ 10. pioneer, 11/11/90.□ 11. The Jews have not only been persecuted by Hitler and by Mohammed (who chased out two and massacred one of the three Jewish clans in Medina) : Stalin's last persecution campaign, mercifully aborted by his death, was directed against the Jews. Until glasnost, merely teaching Hebrew was punished with years of forced labour. The anti- Jewish combine of Islam and Stalinism is reflected in India : those Muslims and Leftists who are Hindu-baiters on the home front, turn out to be Jew-baiters on the international front.□ 12. as it was called by Lance Gay in an article in Sunday Mail, 4/11/90, titled Now a Jewish 'Ayodhya' in Israel.□ 13. Gul-Fraaz M. Ezekiel sums up what led to the shooting ; "According to the report, the riot broke out after a Muslim official sounded a false alarm by megaphone that members of the Temple Mount Faithful were entering the area to lay their cornerstone. The Palestinians responded by attacking the 44 members of the Border police stationed there with stones, bottles and metal bars, shouting 'Slaughter the Jews'. The police responded with teargas but were forced to retreat. Stones were then thrown at the Western Wall worshippers for about fifteen minutes and the gates locked with the police outside." (Pioneer, 20/11/90).□ 14. As in his article For a Positive Hinduism, in Indian Express, 27/11/1990.□ 15. This implies in practice that even a law that fixes the status-quo of places of worship as on 15/8/1947 or on 26/1/1950, cannot impede this gesture. For, even such a law cannot prevent people from voluntarily handing over (or keeping, but changing the religious status of) a mosque.□ 16. The whole story is told by Dipak K. Barua : Buddha Gaya Temple and its History, published by the temple management committee in 1981, and in my Ram Janmabhoomi vs. Babri Masjid, pp. 102-105.□ 17. But in Judaism, the division between the time before the genesis of the religion and the time after that, is not so sharp. In a sense, the biblical God already makes a Covenant with Adam and with Noah, and the generations who lived before Abraham and Moses are not doomed to hell-fire, as in Islam the generations before the Prophet. The

Hebrew God takes his time to reveal himself, and does not punish the people who happened to live too early to hear about the One God.□ 18. The Bible books Exodus, Deuteronomy, Leviticus and Joshua give some strong stories of how ruthless Moses and Joshua were with anyone who stood in the way of the Hebrew conquest of Palestine.□ 19. Statesman, 30/10/90□ 20. 6/2/86, published in A.A.Engineer, op.cit., ch.30.□ 21. Published in id., ch.35. The numeration in the references to the appended documents is confused, and the document is said to be published in July 1989 while commenting on a document from October 1989. Some printing errors seem to have crept in. The VHP evidence in question should not be confused with the historical evidence presented on 23/12/1990, it refers to evidence pertaining to the judicial dispute.□ 22. published as a booklet by the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yajna Samiti, Lucknow 1990 ; no dateline given, but apparently written at the end of January 1990.□ 23. My main source for this judicial chronicle is Deoki Nandan's Sri Rama Janmabhumi, a Historical and Legal Perspective. This is a publication of the Sri Ram Janma Bhumi Mukti Yajna Samiti (Lucknow 1990), which is very much a party to the debate, but justice Nandan's treatment of the developments is factual and precise. I cannot help it that the opposite side has been carefully avoiding the detailed facts of the matter and hiding in a cloud of slogans.□ 24. Muslim Testimony, published in the Lucknow edition of the Pioneer, 5/2/90, slightly modified in Indian Express, 26/2/90, and in the book Hindu Temples : What Happened to Them□ 25. Ram Janmabhoomi : More Evidence, by A.K. Chatterjee, in Indian Express, 26/3/90.□ 26. Sunday Observer, 9/12/90.□ 27. This crucial element in the judicial history of the disputed site is systematically concealed by the secularists and omitted from their over-views of this history, e.g. in Countdown to the Shilanyas (India Today, 15/12/1989), and in A legal history of temple-mosque dispute (Times of India, 8/12/1990).□ 28. For the Hindu assessment of all these elements, see justice Nandan's op.cit., and the article The Hindu View, by a group of VHP-affiliated jurists, in Indian Express, 30/7/1990. For the Muslim view, see Syed Shahabuddin's very informative monthly Muslim India.□ 29. e.g. Gyanendra Pandey, India Magazine, 2/90.□ 30. Reported in Sunday Mail, 27/1/1991.□ 31. The Muslim Personal Law Board declared : "The Shariat does not allow the shifting or demolition of the Babri Masjid as it has not been built on a temple or on illegal land." (Times of India, 9/12/1990) This justification rests on the assumption that the Masjid was

not built on a Mandir, which has meanwhile been thoroughly disproven. But of course, foreseeing that they might lose the historical debate, they also played a different tune : "The law protects it even if built on a temple" (Syed Shahabuddin, Indian Express, 13/12), or Once a mosque, always a mosque. The Babri part in the historical debate has been non-serious and purely tactical.□ 32. More examples in Rape of the Constitution, article by K.B. Jindal in the Pioneer, 25/11/1990. I may add that the declaration of Hindi as the link language (regardless of whether this was a wise move), and the termination of English as an official language, which had to come into force in 1965, have remained a pious constitutional intention, actively sabotaged by the English-speaking elite.□ 33. More examples in Court Verdicts and their Fate, article by dr. S.N. Bhatnagar in the Pioneer, 18/11/1990.□ 34. Reported in Indian Express, 14/12/1990; conspicuously absent in some other papers.□ 35. The Hindu, 19/12/1990.□ 36. In Islam also, a mosque is Allah's property, and the Waqf Board or the mutwalli are only caretakers, not owners. But in Islam, this principle is extended to secular matters also, like the state. The Caliph, who according to Maulana Mohammed Ali was an Emperor and Pope in one was merely the viceregent of the Dar-ul- Islam, with Allah as the lawful ruler.□□ 37. Organiser, 26/11/1989 ; also included in Hindu Temples : What Happened to Them.□ 38. "Arey bhai, Masjid hai hi Kahaan ?" meant for publication in Indian Express, but just then Shourie was sacked as its editor. The reason was not so much the article, but, apparently, his entire policy of including columns by Hindu communalists like Ram Swarup and Sita Ram Goel, and his own articles that debunked some of the prevalent secularism, such as Hideaway Communalism.□ 39. Published in Sunday Observer, 30/12/1990.□ 40. For a real proof of the change in the atmosphere, this is what Chandra Shekhar said in Parliament, two weeks after the Ayodhya slaughter : "I am a Hindu... I am proud of being a Hindu... and because of tolerance to all other religions, I consider Hinduism superior." (mentioned in a interview with him in Hindustan Times, 19/11/1990). The CPI has protested against this statement, because it implies that religions are not tolerant. Well, exactly.□ 41. Patriot, 11/1/1991.□ 42. Interview on 17/11/1990.□ 43. Pioneer, 10/11/1990.□ 44. Reported in Sunday, 11/11/1990. We also get the view of the Bangla Jammat Islami leader Maulana Abbas Ali Khan: "There is no scope for communal harmony."□ 45. Northern India Patrika, 15/11/1990. Ershad was also held up for praise

by Blitz columnist P. Sainath.□ 46. Pioneer, 23/11/1990.□ 47. Column in Sunday Observer, 25/11/1990.□ 48. Hindustan Times, 19/11/1990.□ 49. Northern India Patrika, 15/11/1990.□ 50. Sunday Observer, 25/11/1990.□ 51. Times of India, 2/11/1990.□ 52. Sunday Observer, 25/11/1990.□ 53. Quoted in Indian Express, 21/9/1990. And afterwards often quoted by Hindus, perhaps too often for his credibility among communally mobilized Muslims.□ 54. Hindustan Times, 31/10/1990.□ 55. Letter to the Pioneer, 28/11/1990.□ 56. Letter to the Pioneer, 28/11/1990.□ 57. Sunday Observer, 4/11/1990 ; emphasis mine.□ 58. Letter to Indian Express, 23/11/1990. Since this is much to many Hindus' liking, some in the anti-Hindu camp might suspect that this letter was not written by a real Muslim : as if the phenomenon of pro-Babri Hindus cannot have its Muslim counterpart. Nonetheless, about a letter of similar content by one R. Naqvi (IE 29/11) Syed Shahabuddin wrote back that he had contacted the address mentioned but saw his letter undelivered, and concluded that it must have been a psuedo-Naqvi. Maybe that similarly those anti-Hindu Hindus are really pseudonmous Shahabuddins ?□ 59. Letter to Indian Express, 9/11/1990.□ 60. Letter to the Statesman, 12/11/1990, and to Indian Express, 13/11/1990.□ 61. Letter to the Hindustan Times, 6/11/90.□ 62. Letter by K.N. Seth, who quotes him, in Hindustan Times, 26/11/1990.□ 63. Communalism and Communal Violence in India (Ajanta Publ., Delhi 1989), p.320.□ 64. This was at a function in Himachal Bhavan, presided over by Girilal Jain, where two books were presented to the public and the press : Hindu Temples : What Happened to Them, by Arun Shourie and others; and the present writer's book Ram Janmabhoomi vs. babri Masjid, a Case Study in Hindu-Muslim Conflict.□ 65. His two speeches, in Hindi, have been published as a booklet: Sri Rama Janma Mandir ke Navanirman ka Prashna, by the Bharatiya Jan Sangh.□ 66. The point that politicians should not marginalize the moderates within their own community by treating the hardliners as its true representative, is made compellingly by Arun Shourie in his Religion in Politics, Roli Books, Delhi 1989 (1987).□ 67. Especially Sita Ram Goel : Perversion of India's Political Parlance, Voice of India, Delhi 1983.□ 68. Indian Express, 13/12/1990. Emphasis added.□ 69. Sunday Observer, 4/11/1990, carried an article Diary of a 'Kar sevak' : Journey to nowhere. But it is fake, it is written by a reporter who at best put on the apparel of a Kar Sevak, but made absolutely no effort to understand the mind of the people he had spied on.□ 70. In its 10/12/1990

issue, even the American weekly Newsweek took note of the unpalatably streamlined news mores on Doordarshan, and explained why Indian viewers increasingly watch News videos made by private studios.□ 71. Times of India, 14/11/1990.□ 72. To mr. Sardesai's collaboration with falsehood, I prefer this commentary by Amit Agarwal, in Times India, 4/11/1990: "Governments, when they suppress information in this manner, always say they do so in the national interest, that they soften things so that riots don't break out. Well, Doordarshan news itself is a riot."□ 73. Sunday, 2/12/1990.□ 74. Times of India, 23/12/1989.□ 75. But they have been learning. The text Evidence for the Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir, presented to the government on December 23, was sent to all the press people and many others besides.□ 76. For another example: the story that Indians understand nothing about sex, because, as a Dutch correspondent wrote, "there is not even a Hindi word for orgasm" (as in most languages before the sexologists took over). Moreover, women don't enjoy it, for they call love-making kaam karnaa, i.e. do work (as if this terminology is specific to woman; and here kaam comes not from karma, work, but from kama, erotic enjoyment, as in Kama Sutra).□ 77. In the name of History', published in Indian Express, 25/2/90.□ 78. Indian Express, 1/4/90.□ 79. Ayodhya Dispute: Tool for Political Mobilization, in The Hindu, 1/11/90.□ 80. op. cit., p.4.□ 81. Indian Express, 25/2/1990.□ 82. Yet, on the flap of the book, it is said: "It is not only violence which must be condemned but also distortion of history and intellectual dishonesty." What makes A.A. Engineer's own distorted selection more objectionable, is that he realizes that "coming generations will have the right to know what the controversy was about".□ 83. Partha S. Ghosh; Ram Temple Controversy: Time for dispassionate Introspection, in the 17/11/90 issue.□ 84. Communalism and the Writing of Indian History (People's Publishing House, Delhi 1987 (1967), p.15.□ 85. From Glimpses of World History, quoted in the words- of-wisdom section Thus said Nehru, in National Herald, 9/11/90.□ 86. Incidentally, Hsuen Tsang's statement that his patron, king Harsha, worshipped both Buddha and the Hindu gods, is always carefully kept out of secularists' invocations of Hsuen Tsang's authority, as it is one more blow to the myth of Hindu-Buddhist struggle.□ 87. In A.A. Engineer: op. cit., p.37-38.□ 88. Indian Express, 5/12/90, by prof. Romila Thapar, prof. S. Gopal and prof. K. N. Panikkar.□ 89. Indian Express, 2/12/90.□ 90. Reported in Indian Express, 6/12/90.□ 91. Prof. Lal has re-summarized his findings in an article in Manthan, 10/90. The JNU

historians's reply statement in Indian Express, 5/12/90 also takes on prof. Lal's statement.□ 92. Reported in Indian Express, 5/12/90, which also mentions that mr. K.V. Soundarajan of the ASI confirms that the temple existed.□ 93. Letter to Indian Express, 15/12/1990. The same issue contains the letters by JNU historians Romila Thapar and K.N. Panikkar, and by a JNU sociologist, R. Champakalakshmi, who go on hammering on the non-mentioning of the pillar-bases in the first report. Well, thanks to Muhammed K.K.'s testimony, their insinuation that these pillar-bases are a recent concoction, falls flat on its face.□ 94. Indian Express, 18/12/1990.□ 95. For some more high-handed overruling of evidence, and medieval reasoning using sheer arguments of authority, see the interview with prof. Romila Thapar in Times of India, 9/12/90. The line cited by her from the first archaeological report, that the entire late period was devoid of any interest, in fact implies that the report about that period would not be too detailed, leaving ample room for so far unpublished new revelations like that of the pillar-bases.□ 96. Times of India, 6/12/90.□ 97. On 7/12/90 also, Times of India gave to an article, in which it was cursorily though only implicitly admitted that there must have been a pre-Babri building on the site, the entirely misleading title No pillar-bases at Ayodhya ASI reports. As dr. Gupta had already explained, the detailed report had not been published yet. The article amply quotes B.B. Lal but takes care not to mention his most recent statement on the issue. The same undeontological invoking of prof. B.B. Lal's authority for a theory just recently repudiated by himself occurs in the Romila Thapar interview of 9/12/90.□ 98. Prof. Gupta wrote, in a letter published in Times of India on 13/12/1990 : "In a conversation with me, he has completely dissociated himself from this."□ 99. Emphasis mine ; date not given but quoted with strong approval in Sunday, 11/11/90. The same thing is said by S. Mulgaonkar, in India Express, 22/12/1990, and by others.□ 100. Blitz, 11/8/90. On 25/9/1990, she filed a writ petition in Lucknow High Court claiming the Buddhist origin of the Babri Masjid.□ 101. Ambedkar's contemporary, M.N. Roy, was perhaps the first to link the myth of Buddhist social revolution with the myth of Islam as a liberation movement welcomed by the Indian masses, in his 1939 book Role of Islam in History.□ 102. Her claim has been conclusively laid to rest in a reply by S.D. Thirumala Rao, in Blitz, 17/11/90. That she nonetheless continues to take it very seriously, is shown in her interview with Times of India, 11/12/1990.□ 103. Mainstream, 17/11/90. To the same effect, one can quote

Harbans Mukhia in Communalism and the Writing of Indian History.□ 104. A ruler who has been more reliably accused of the killing of 500 Buddhist monks by his army (which, he pleaded, acted autonomously), was Ashok, the secularists' darling. The affair is reported in the Vinaya Pitaka, in the chronicle of the Buddhist Council, where the event was discussed. These monks refused to accompany the soldiers to Ashok's court, where the king wanted to pronounce judgment on a dispute within the monk community. The monks contended that a king should mind his secular business, and were killed for it by the soldiers of that one outstanding communalist in pre-Muslim India, Ashok.□ 105. In fact, there is no real evidence of fully Buddhist rulers in Indian history except for Ashok. Incidentally, Mr. Ghosh forgets to ask why there are absolutely no Hindu temples of that period left in all of North India.□ 106. Title in Sunday Observer, 4/3/90.□ 107. Indian Express, 25/2/90 and 1/4/90.□ 108. To my knowledge, in other papers than Indian Express, the debate has been mentioned once, vaguely. Harsh Sethi writes in Sunday Observer, 18/11/90 : "The well-known exchange between the JNU historians and Prof. A.R. Khan of Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla, reported in Indian Express earlier this year, gives a flavour of how the best of our historians play with evidence."□ 109. Indian Express, 1/4/90.□ 110. The Week, 3/2/1991.□ 111. Communalism and the Writing of Indian History, p.15-16.□ 112. Communalism and the Writing of Indian history, p.34.□ 113. Communalism and the Writing of Indian History, p.30.□ 114. Marrying a widow (or more often, taking her as concubine), in the war against the Infidels, often meant effectively "killing the men and abducting the women".□ 115. This Belgian king was rightfully criticized for his harsh colonial policies. The example always given by his critics was that plantation workers who couldn't deliver the quota, had a hand chopped off. Recent research has shown that the largely autonomous officials who meted out this punishment, were Muslim Zanzibaris : they considered non-delivery of the quota as theft, and applied the Islamic punishment for theft, hand amputation.□ 116. Muslim apologists here often say that slavery just happened to be around in Pagan Arabia. But as Maxime Rodinson, the French Leftist historian sympathetic to Mohammed's historic mission has pointed out, the tribal society knew slavery only to a limited degree, if only because it was hard to guard slaves for small communities living in tents. Only when Mohammed formed a real state, slavery could become a big institution.□ 117. According to the experts for the VHP side in the evidence

debate, on 24-25 January 1991, it was prof. Sharma who demanded six extra weeks to study the evidence presented by the VHP, thus making a mockery of this debate. From someone who had just completed a book on the matter and made several public statements, one would have expected a fresh familiarity with the evidence. Conversely, if he was so ignorant about the matter as to need six more weeks, his statements should be weighed accordingly. □ 118. *Al-Hind : The Making of the Indo-Islamic World* (Oxford University Press 1990), p.219-223. □ 119. *Indian Express*, 18/9, 5/10 and 17/10/1990. □ 120. Not that an isolated occasion of saying the truth automatically leads to the disappearance of falsehood. Dharampal's famous book *The Beautiful Tree* completely demolished the myth that the Brahmins kept all the education for their own caste, and that Shudras were kept in darkness and illiteracy. Yet, the myth is still repeated, and the book has only reinforced the Leftist rhetoric that the British (who destroyed this indigenous education system) are to blame for everything. It is not enough to unearth the truth, it also has to be broadcast, and nobody should get away with pretending it isn't there. □ 121. If Buddha had wanted to reform society, he would have remained a prince in his palace, because the seat of power is the best place from which to organize reform. The seat of power is the first target of people who want to re-create society, such as the Communists, and it was the first thing which Buddha renounced. □ 122. *Indian Express*, 9/12/90. □ 123. A week after issuing their new rules for journalists, they effectively killed the Panjab AIR director, R.K. Talib, apparently for hosting a talk about the terrorist ultimatum. Five of the separatist groups issued a joint statement claiming responsibility for the murder. They opened up new horizons in cynicism by declaring that they had nothing against the man personally, and that "the murder was only symbolical". Subsequently, their demand for more Panjabi and less Hindi on the radio was obediently complied with. □ 124. *Rajendra Singh Nirala : Ham Hindu Hain, Bharat- Bharati*, Delhi 1989 ; *Ham Hindu Kyon*, id. 1990. □ 125. In his *History of the Sikhs* (1963), he has argued for a Sikh state within India, in which the use of Gurumukhi and the learning of the Sikh Scriptures would be obligatory in the schools, and in which the state would actively protect and promote Sikh culture. If that is secularism, let him explain what communalism is. He rejected the concept of a Panjabi Suba as a dishonest cover for what was really intended as a Sikh Suba. Later he opposed the separatist militants, but has defended his Sikh Suba as

protector of Sikh identity in some more articles.□ 126. K.P. Agrawal took the trouble of counting how many hundreds of times Hindu names and concepts, like Parambrahma, Omkara, Veda, Hari, appear in the Guru Granth. "Ram" figures about 2400 times. See his *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib ki Mahima* (Bharat-Bharati, Delhi 1985), p.2.□ 127. The following excerpt from a Times of India editorial (14/12/1990) is basically about Tavleen Singh's stand : "As long as determined killers are charitably viewed as misguided and alienated individuals who can be reformed by showering generous doses of love and affection, the Panthic Committee will continue to have a free run."□ 128. In the mid-19th century this was already a matter of debate between George Jacob Holyoake (Reason, 1851), apparently the first to use the word secularism as a political term in English, and Charles Bradlaugh : the latter considered atheism essential to secularism, while the former held that secularism just means that state and religion are mutually exclusive, not hostile. In fact, that is what, to Holyoake, justified a separate term secularism, distinct from atheism.□ 129. One might extrapolate the dichotomy secular/non- secular to the non-religious domain. The monks' practice of pure religion corresponds to the research scientist's practice of fundamental science, and the parish priest's practice of applied religion corresponds to the engineer's practice of applied science. The engineer's work is secular in the sense that it is world-oriented, intended for intervention in the temporal flow of events ; while the researcher's work is non-secular, in the sense that it is truth-oriented, intended towards vision of the eternal laws of nature.□ 130. As the antonym of secularism, the term communalism is simply unknown in the West. The antonym is clericalism. The term rightly applies both to clerics' intervention in state affairs, and to governmental intervention in strictly religious affairs (as with the 18th century Austrian emperor Joseph II). The Hindi term Sampradayikta would translate as "sectarianism".□ 131. During the build-up to the Kar Seva on 30/10/1990, the Vishva Hindu Parishad published ads in some papers, with the caption : Hindu India, Secular India.□ 132. India Today, 15/12/1990.□ 133. In China and Tibet, it is at the time of writing not a memory yet.□ 134. The term which the Chinese philosopher Chuang-tse used for meditation, is tsuo-wang, "sit and forget". But this is not a flight from outer reality, which is indeed to be forgotten during meditation, but a venture into the inner reality, which is most of the time forgotten due to immersion in outer reality.□ 135. One of the most striking examples of how naturally Pagan

practices come to us, quite regardless of any dogma, is the fact that the French revolution symbolically enthroned "the goddess Reason". This personification of Reason as a goddess had of course existed millennia before, e.g. the Greek goddess Pallas Athena. Reason was an integral part of the Pagan religion.□ 136. While today in China, Taoism is ritualism in effect, the great theoretician of ritual was Confucius. He made it his business to register and codify all existing rituals, and eulogized the value of ritual in building a harmonious society. It is in this search for authentic information on ritual that he met archive- keeper Lao Tan, also called Lao Tse, later considered as the founder of Taoism. The postulated opposition between the mystical and profound Lao-tse and Confucius "who propagated superficial ritualism", is to an extent misconceived.□ 137. The conferral of a hereditary character on social functions finds its parallel among the Germanic (as well as many other) peoples, when upon the advent of Christianity, kingship ceased to be based on merit and became a hereditary title. The one jati division in European society, which somehow most researchers on caste have overlooked, is the feudal institution of nobility. The French Revolution deprived it of its social relevance, but it has remained a largely endogamous group well into the 20th century.□ 138. The Buddha never said : "Down with the Brahmins ! Break Brahmin tyranny !" On the contrary, he taught about how to be a true Brahmin, as against having the outer attributes but not the inner qualities of the Brahmin. Many of his disciples were Brahmins. The myth of Buddhist social revolution against Brahmin tyranny can be disproven on many counts with the Buddha's own words.□ 139. For a balanced description and a largely positive evaluation of the varna doctrine by a Westerner, see Alain Danielou : *Les Quatre Sens de la Vie*, Paris 1976.□ 140. Shudra Raj as description of communism, in my opinion, wrongly narrows down the Shudra varna to the proletariat. This varna in fact also comprised the artists, a class particularly disliked by all communist regimes because of their free lifestyle. This relative freedom from rules and moral duties is actually inherent in the Shudra status : the higher the varna, the more rules one has to observe.□ 141. Some will not even grant him the essential Brahmin attribute: thought. All his writings are full of borrowed thought.□ 142. A retired Indian Army commander has explained to me how an intervention force well within India's capacity, could have stopped the Chinese in Eastern Tibet. It would have been a war, but it would have been a genuine

war of independence, and the number of casualties would have been far less than the lakhs of Tibetans that have by now been killed by the Chinese occupation force. Short, for such a noble cause, a prime minister with a kshatriya spirit would have gone in. And failing that, he could have opened a diplomatic offensive. But he chose to totally betray Tibet.□ 143. It is of course possible that Nehru's statement was not a matter of personal inclination or conviction, but a smoke-screen for his heartfelt approval of a Communist take-over.□ 144. An example of a human, culturally determined belief in Mahavira's teachings, is the belief in generatio spontanea, the belief that if you have the right environment for a certain species to live in, then automatically that species will come into being there. it is not central to his teachings at all, it is mentioned somewhere for the sake of comparison, and being a culturally determined misconception, it may just as well be discarded without anyhow affecting the Jain path to Liberation. But if it had been construed as God- given, there would be a theological problem.□ 145. Sunday, 4/11/1990.□ 146. When Mahatma Gandhi said : "I am a Hindu, I am a Muslim, I am a Christian, I am a Sikh", one of the Muslim leaders aptly commented : "Well, that is a typically Hindu thing to say." And we may add that it is an absolutely un-Islamic thing to say.□ 147. The recent reproach by Christians that other societies have not cared for social work, can be answered by Chuang-tse's parable: when the pond has dried up, the fish spew water on each other, trying to stay wet ; but when they are swimming they forget about each other. Traditional societies had better social security than what the missionaries, whose arrival together with colonialism marked the break-up of traditional culture, can make up for with all their charity.□ 148. For those who believe in etymology, some trace the Latin word religio to religare, "re-bind", "re-integrate"; others link it with re-legere, "re-collect" or "re-read"; which itself is related to lex, "law".□ 149. The Independent, 7/11/1990.□ 150. The Hindu, 8/12/1990.□ 151. That it was very certainly Muslims who started the Hyderabad violence can indirectly be derived from the fact that even M.J. Akbar blames "minority extremists" along with the "majority extremists" including the BJP. Both as an investigative journalist and as a Congress spokesman M.J. Akbar has always seen the BJP/RSS-hand behind practically every riot (see his Riot after Riot, Penguin 1988). That standard allegation means nothing. But when even he cannot avoid mentioning minority extremists, you can be sure they were there.□ 152.

The Statesman, 11/12/1990. Emphasis added.□ 153. A Muslim lawyer declared : "Actually the educated Muslims have not been too happy about the tenor of Mulayam Singh' speeches at his anti-communalism rallies. Such intemperate language can only annoy the Hindus and deepen the Hindu-Muslim divide. We also realize that he is after the Muslim vote. his motives are very suspect." (cited in The Week, 28/10/1990.□ 154. Times of India, 7/10/1990. Emphasis added by Muslim India, which reproduces the article in its 12/1990 issue.□ 155. Times of India, 7/10/1990, included in the 12/1990 issue of Muslim India.□ 156. Muslim India, 12/1990, p.555.□ 157. Samachar Post 3/11/1990. Remark the belief in mantra magic: a slogan is uttered, and hocus pocus, a bomb explodes.□ 158. Indian Express, 30/10/1990. Emphasis added.□ 159. Indian Express, 30/10/1990.□ 160. The name is mentioned in the Patriot, 12/12/1990.□ 161. On 11/12/1990, the Censor Board banned the inclusion of a news story on the illegal arms manufacturing in U.P., in the Observer News Channel video magazine. The same day, a team of another video news company, Kalachakra was barred from entering riot-hit Aligarh.□ 162. India Today, 15/1/1990.□ 163. Reported in Times of India,17/12/1990.□ 164. Organiser,6/1/1990.It is unclear whether these are literal quotes.□ 165. Times of India, 12/12/1990.□ 166. The Hindu,9/12/1990.□ 167. Times of India, 14/12/1990.□ 168. Policemen also complain that families of riot victims get Rs. one lakh compensation (at least those of autumn 1990 in U.P.), while their own families would get only Rs 20,000.□ 169. Reported in Times of India, 12/12/1990.□ 170. Times of India, 16/12/1990.□ 171. Patriot, 21/12/1990.□ 172. Indian Express, 13/12/1990.□ 173. According to Frontline, 22/12/1990, the Hyderabad violence of 1978 was triggered by the rape of a Muslim woman and the killing of her husband in a police station. That may of course not be the entire story, but I am willing to believe that those things which in history have been done on a massive scale by self-righteous conquerors, and that are being done frequently by policemen and soldiers in Pakistan and Bangladesh (like extortion, rape and murder of members of a minority community), sometimes even happen in India.□ 174. Indian Express, 9/12/1990.□ 175. During Friday noon prayers on 14/12/1990 in the Delhi Jama Masjid. Reported in Times of India, 15/12/1990.□ 176. Times of India, 23/12/1990.□ 177. Sunday Observer, 23/12/1990.□ 178. In a rabidly communalist article in the secularist paper Mainstream (5/1/1991), N.A. Ansari demands : "The Muslims must be

provided at least 30% jobs in government, semi-government sectors including the military, the police, the administration and the judiciary."□ 179. Indian Express, 2-3/1/1991.□ 180. The Hindu, 9/12/1990.□ 181. Times of India, 23/12/1990.□ 182. Frontline, 22/12/1990.□ 183. As Frontline puts it in its 27/10/1990 editorial : "The minorities feel threatened and insecure, as is evident from the reaction of Muslims to the rath yatra and the Ram jyoti processions." This reaction was absent in the case of the rathyatra, perhaps due to large safety measures and the intimidatingly vast numbers of Hindus assembled. But what Frontline so prudishly calls the reaction of Muslims to the Ram jyoti processions, was in many cases bomb attacks.□ 184. This scenario is confirmed by M.J. Akbar in The Hitler Nerve, in Illustrated Weekly of India, 22/12/1990. He tries to portray it as the model for the 1990 BJP behaviour ; but drawing a parallel with the Khalistani tactics and with riot-fomenting by Muslim extremists fits the facts better.□ 185. The Hindu, 19/12/1990.□ 186. There is an exception : in Pakistan, the census figures register an unexplained decline of 0.09% between 1971 and 1981. But anyway, in East Pakistan/Bangla Desh, the Muslim population has risen 10% from 1951 to 1981, at a constant tempo. In the Subcontinent, there has been an increase of about 1.5% per 10 years, with the rate of increase itself gradually increasing. Between 1971 and 1981, the Muslim community was the only one to gain in percentage, at the expense of all others, mostly of the Hindus.□ 187. In his article "Why the riots always start with attack on Hindus" (Organiser, 13/1/1991), P.S. Yog builds a strong case for the assumption made in the title. He also quotes F.K. Khan Durrani (Meaning of Pakistan) saying : "The creation of Pakistan was necessary as a base for conquering the rest of India", and Jayaprakash Narayan remarking that the aim of communal riots seemed to be to secure a second partition of the country.□ 188. Riot reporting is unreliable because it is largely monopolized by investigative journalists who know before they leave for the riot-hit area, systematically and often unjustly blamed, it is because Hindu society somehow does not breed any capable journalists and fact- finders who combine a basic commitment to Hindu culture with a disciplined professionalism and objectivity.□ 189. See their pamphlet on the Jamshedpur riots report, or their list of favourable Court verdicts, What High Courts Say on RSS.□ 190. K.R. Malkani gives, in his The RSS Story, p.144, in a long list of good deeds or cases of non-involvement in evil deeds, just two examples of the RSS doing everything in its power to

control riots and restore order, and in one of the two they had been dragged in by members of the Shia community asking for help. This leaves one case of active intervention.□ 191. Taking Khushwant Singh's lead, I will grant that the RSS and BJP workers have played a decisive role in limiting the damage and saving many lives in the anti- Sikh riots of 1984, allegedly started by the Congress youth organization out to revenge Indira's murder.□ 192. Hinduism should stop seeing itself through the eyes of other religions. Thus, in a Hindu catechism book *Daddy, am I a Hindu ?* (by V. Edakkandiyal, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan 1988) there is constant reference to Christianity. Many a great man of Hindu history is described as a Christ-like figure. It is not other religions that measure the value of Hinduism, but its use for human happiness. The current hostile fixation on Islam is but a negative of this alienated self-image. The self-rediscovery of Hindu society will push this hostile preoccupation with Islam, like the servile preoccupation with Christ, to the background.□ 193. In the case *Varsha Publications vs. State of Maharashtra*, in 1983, the state government had given in when Bombay Muslim sought a ban on an article exploring the theory that the Kaaba had been a Shaiva temple (ancient Hindu merchants in Arabia saw a Shivalingam in the black stone worshipped in Mecca). But in a landmark decision, the Court ruled that history cannot be kept under cold storage just because somebody's feelings are hurt, and struck down the ban on and seizure of the publication.□ 194. The first Latin translation of the Quran was titled : *Alcoranus sive Lex Islamica Mohammedis Pseudoprophetae*. Later Christian writings on Mohammed carried titles like *Mohammed the Impostor*.□ 195. However, sometimes Khushwant Singh bravely refuses to join Muslim demands for book-banning : notably when the Muslims felt offended by his own pornographic novel *Delhi*.□ 196. According to *Indian Express*, 13/11/1990, the Press Council held the publication from *The Satanic Verses* to be an aberration from the path of ethical rectitude.□ 197. e.g. Pranav Khullar in *Patriot*, as late as 12/12/1990, writes that the washerman, the vegetable vendor etc. whom he had asked, had no intention of reading Rushdie: "Nobody cared a hoot for Rushdie. In a free country people have the right not to read him." But the whole article is written to put to unfunny ridicule the real issue: in a free country, people also have the right to read him.□ 198. Sunday, 11/11/1990. The book he refers to, is apparently Shourie's *Religion in Politics*, a very sane and sober look at several Scriptures in the light of reason.□ 199. On 31/10/1990,

Pakistan's highest Islamic court has ruled that defining the name of Prophet Mohammed is an offence punishable only by death. Life imprisonment for this offence, so far prescribed under Pakistan's penal code, is not in conformity with Islamic and Quranic teachings, the five judges ruled. Broadmindedly, the court also ruled that the death penalty would equally be invoked for contempt of any other prophet.□ 200. Times of India, 27/12/1990.□ 201. Indian Express, 30/12/1990.□ 202. Times of India, 30/12/90.□ 203. When in the seventies a Danish film director intended to make a full-blooded erotic film on Jesus, the pope publicly asked him to refrain from doing so. The pope is granted his right of expression of his opinion ; the point is that he did not ask for a ban.□ 204. The Calcutta Quran Petition by Chandmal Chopra, Voice of India, Delhi 1986.□ 205. After this, Mohammed got a revelation which allowed him to marry her, after her divorce, in spite of a taboo on the marriage of a man with his adopted son's ex-wife. In Christian polemics against Islam, this story of Mohammed and Zaynab is a classical argument that the revelations were Mohammed's own mental fabrications, always at his service to arrange for the fulfilment of his desires. Even his favourite wife Aisha is said to have mocked this all too convenient revelation.□ 206. In an article, Fomenting reaction, written for the Economic Times in December 1990 but not published there ; however, translations have been published in Hindi papers.□ 207. The reason why Nehru gave in to this demand so easily, is perhaps that he wanted to hit K.M. Munshi, the Kulapati of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, who had earned Nehru's enmity for his taking pride in Hinduism. Munshi, then U.P. governor, apologized publicly for the publication, and even declared that every year he celebrated the Prophet's birthday.□ 208. Shortly after the ban on Ram Swarup's book, the Kerala High Court has upheld an earlier verdict banning the rock-opera Jesus Christ Superstar for being blasphemous. Of course, in Europe it has been performed in theatres, shown in cinemas and broadcast on most TV stations.□ 209. Some people fear that it will be hard to sustain this secularist policy, given the mounting presence of Islamic fundamentalism in some European countries. However, they cannot make much more upheaval than they did against The Satanic Verses. In that agitation, a few bookstores were burnt down, without any human casualties. No government has even considered banning the book. So, I am confident that even the present wave of immigrant Islamic fundamentalism will not rise high enough to threaten

our secular polity.□ 210. The Mahabharat producer B.R. Chopra said (or, according to Sunday, 23/12/1990, he) that "the two serials made millions proud of their culture and religion".□ 211. From his Communalism in Modern India, Delhi 1984 ; quoted by Amir Hasan in Secularism versus State Communalism in India, on p.117 of Bidyut Chakrabarty, ed.: Secularism and Indian Polity, Segment Books, Delhi 1990.□ 212. Not that Hindus have anyone to blame but themselves. You can call it over-generous, or self- forgetful to an almost criminal extent, but at any rate, a Hindu majority voted this Article of the Constitution.□ 213. Times of India, 12/12/1990. Remark that nation should have been state.□ 214. It may be repeated that secular is a polar opposite of religious (broadly), and that it does not mean anti-religious any more than that female means anti-male. Secularism merely upholds the autonomy of the secular sphere, without even denying (let alone crusading against) the religious sphere.□ 215. This includes groups of people who believe in certain pedagogical approaches, like Rudolf Steiner's system of education, rooted in a doctrine called Anthroposophy.□ 216. See articles by Ram Swarup in Indian Express, 19- 20/9/1990, Ram Narayan's rejoinder on 15/11/1990, and Ram Swarup's final rejoinder on 16/11/1990, as also prof. N. Krishnaswamy's rejoinder on 21/12/1990.□ 217. Reported in Indian Express 19/12/1990. Not so long ago, the paper of the Belgian Marxist-Leninist party published an article by a historian who set out to debunk the myth that the communists had started this war. Fortunately we now have the Pravda to tell us the truth.□ 218. Reported in Time, 14/1/1991. Meanwhile in Latin America, some people floated the idea of celebrating 1992 as the 500th anniversary of a meeting of cultures (cfr. the cultural synthesis for which Hindus should be grateful to the Muslim invaders). The idea was rejected in disgust by both Native Americans and European- descended intellectuals.□ 219. The Gypsies are always forgotten when people mention the Nazi camps. They speak an Aryan language, in fact a Panjabi-Hindi dialect (efforts by Gypsy linguists are on to standardize their language using Devanagari script), so their massacre raises questions about Hitler's Aryan scheme. They had been deported in the early part of Muslim rule in India. In Europe they have been living as nomads, and they are known for certain crafts, for fortune-telling and for their music. But people mistrusted them as thieves, and that hostility was taken to an extreme by Hitler.□ 220. Similarly, both Israel and Korea had earlier refused to receive

German and Japanese visitors unless they offered an apology for their countries' war crimes. If Hindus today demand a similar act of recognition of past crimes, this is not overbearing or coercive, it is quite a normal thing to do.□ 221. With glasnost in Poland, the official death toll of Auschwitz has been brought down from four million to over one million. Jewish sources had estimated it at about two million. It is therefore being suggested that the total number of Jews killed by the Nazis is only between five and six million.□ 222. About the use of Hindu troops in Muslim armies, see K.S. Lal : Indian Muslims, Who Are They (Voice of India, Delhi 1990), p.106-108.□ 223. Bat Ye'or : The Dhimmi. Jews and Christians under Islam, Fairleigh Dickinson 1985, translated from French, Le Dhimmi, Paris 1980. The French paper Le Figaro put it briefly : "The dhimmis were undoubtedly the colonized natives." (review on 26/7/1980)□ 224. Speech reported in Times of India, 1/12/1990.□ 225. Speech by the Math head of the Kabirpanthis in Allahabad, available on cassette ; and personal talk with the Math head of the Kabirpanthis in Varanasi. The fable that Kabir brought a synthesis between Islam and Hinduism, does not survive a comparison between his works and the Quran. That Kabir was a simple weaver who produced lofty poetry just like that, is another fable for children of socialists : Kabir was well-read and knew his classics. There are hardly any Muslims in the Kabirpanth, and it is only the Hindus who venerate him.□ 226. A spiritually-minded friend of mine had read Rumi and other Sufis. He felt attracted to Islam, the religion that he thought must have inspired these Sufis. So he read the Quran. Well, that was the end of his love affair. But he continued his search. The real sources of Sufism, the pre-Islamic religions of Iran, were either directly related to the Vedic religion (Zoroastrianism), or influenced by Buddhism and other later Hindu sects. So logically, he ended up in India, and is now a genuine traditional Swami.□ 227. Praising V.P. Singh for his caste-based reservations policy, Bihar chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav has said : "V.P. Singh is the first person after Lord Buddha and Mahavira to do something for the poor and downtrodden." This assumes a mistaken view of Buddha's and Mahavira's work : they considered all worldly endeavours futile, including social reform, and they saw suffering as the core experience (and their Arya Dharma as the solution) in the life of all sentient beings, not just of the downtrodden. Such misconceptions may be forgiven to a politician who extols backwardness, but not to the intellectuals who fed him this myth in the first place.□ 228.

When Ambedkar led several lakhs of followers into mass conversion to Buddhism, he extracted from them 22 promises, essentially to break with all Hindu practices. This is totally un-Buddhist, as was pointed out at the time by experienced Buddhists from Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Ambedkar's mental fixation on hatred for the Brahmins was not visibly mitigated by the Compassion which Buddhism teaches. It was a political conversion, just like the mass conversions his grandson has been leading in late 1990.□ 229. The key work to understanding polytheism is Ram Swarup: *The Word as Revelation : Names of Gods*, published by Impex India, New Delhi, 1980.□ 230. *Mainstream*, 5/1/1991, and *Times of India*, 5/1/1991.□ 231. *Hindustan Times*, 6/1/1991, with reference to Abd al-Aziz Sayed al-Ahl: *Khalifa al-Zahid Umar bin al-Aziz*, Cairo.□ 232. e.g. A.A. Engineer has devoted a chapter to Islamic tolerance in his book *Communalism and Communal Violence in India*, Ajanta Publ., Delhi 1989. In it, he parades the classics of tolerance in the Quran and early Islamic history.□ 233. In Arabia, in the century preceding Islam, they had persecuted the Christians, in a joint revenge action together with other religious communities that were persecuted in the Christian Byzantine empire, including the Nestorian Christian heretics.□ 234. A few years ago, the Israeli representative in Bombay (there was no ambassador, because no full diplomatic relations) declared, no doubt correctly, that it was only the Indian government that sided with the Arabs, while the Indian people sympathized with Israel. He was thrown out of the country.□ 235. e.g. M.J.Akbar (in his *India: The Siege Within*), Rafiq Zakaria, A.A. Engineer. To M.J.Akbar I would give the benefit of the doubt: he seems not so steeped in Islamic theology, and he is in the anti-Hindu-front as a secularist rather than as a pan-Islamic schemer. But for each of these moderated, one should compare what they say in English with what they say in Urdu: doing the moderate thing before a modern and non-Muslim audience doesn't prove much.□ 236. *The Times of India*, never a staunch defender of Rushdie, in its editorial of 12/1/1991, has asked Indian Muslims to "responds to mr. Rushdie's appeal".□ 237. Dr. H. Somers : *Jezus de Messias. Was het Christendom een vergissing? ("Jesus the Messiah. Was Christianity a Mistake?")* EPO Publ., Antwerp 1986.□ 238. Ambedkar was a nationalist, and he saw through the anti-national, colonial inspiration of the Aryan Invasions theory (which the British called the furniture of Empire). It is because of his nationalism that he refused offers to convert to the predatory religions that continued their invasion of India.

He also declared that the choice of Buddhism for mass conversion was the one least harmful to the country.□ 239. One should, however, take into account that the word race was ambiguous in its meaning, and could mean a people, without any biological dimension attached to it. As late as 1947, some British officials spoke of Hindus and Muslims as the two races of India, without intending any racial definition of these religious communities.□ 240. "The Brahmin of Panjab is racially of the same stock as the Chamar of Punjab", etc. "Caste system does not demarcate racial division. Caste system is a social division of people of the same race", Ambedkar said in *Annihilation of Caste*. See p.49 of his *Writings and Speeches*, vol.1, Education Dpt., Government of Maharashtra 1979.□ 241. It is well-known that most Indians prefer a lighter to a darker skin colour. This may be due to the fact that the lighter-skinned Turkish and British rulers have enjoyed superiority over the Aryan brown (the term is Kipling's), more than to any Nordic homeland of invading Aryans. The supposedly pre-Aryan god Shiva is white, while the incarnations of Vishnu are dark. Muslims like Amir Khusrau spoke scornfully of the Hindus as crow-faced, i.e. black.□ 242. such as K.R. Malkani : *The RSS Story*.□ 243. *Sunday Mail*, 23/12/1990.□ 244. *Sunday Observer*, 23/12/1990.□ 245. For a thorough debunking of the fables about the relation between Islam and the Backward Castes, see K.S. Lal : *Legacy of Muslim Rule in India*, Aditya prakashan, 1991.□ 246. *Samachar Post*, 3/11/1990.□ 247. *Times of India*, 1/2/1991.□ 248. Concerning the caste system as checking the islamization of India, see K.S. Lal : *Indian Muslims, Who Are They?* (Voice of India, 1990), p.114-122.□ 249. It is also used in a subtler form, as in Mani Shankar Aiyar's article *The Saffron Swastika*, in *Sunday*, 2/12/1990.□ 250. In Greek, the etymologically related words are *aristos*, the best (wherefrom aristocracy), and *arete*, virtue.□ 251. While the term *Arya* is used only a few times in the Vedas, it was used a lot by the Buddhists and Jains. Today, everybody uses it all the time, though perhaps unknowingly : the honorific -ji, as in *Gandhiji*, is an evolved form, through Pali *aya* or *aja* and *Apabhramsa aje*, from Sanskrit *arya*.□ 252. Prem Shankar Jha writes :The Nazis created myths about Germany's Aryan heritage and resurrected legends by symbols such as the Nordic sagas and the Swastika to mobilize mass support. *Mainstream*, 1/12/1990. That this had anything to do with Hitler's mass support, is nonsense ; the common people were in no way familiar with these myths and symbols.□ 253. *Illustrated Weekly of India*,

22/12/1990.□ 254. This polemic has been fully covered in Sita Ram Goel : History of Hindu-Christian Encounters (Voice of India, 1989).□ 255. Maulana Azad and the Communists accused Home Minister Sardar Patel of somehow having condoned the murder, as part of their campaign against Hinduism, of which Patel was a great benefactor.□ 256. The details are given in the introduction, by Nathuram's brother Gopal Godse, to Nathuram's speech in court : May it Please Your Honour, Surya Prakashan, Delhi.□ 257. Illustrated Weekly of India, 22/12/1990.□ 258. V.D. Savarkar : Hindutva (published in 1923, sixth edition published by Bharatiya Sahitya Sadan, Delhi 1989.)□ 259. This scenario of wiping out Paganism and dividing the spoils between Islam and Christianity, before the final showdown, is not that far-fetched : it is being enacted in Africa. In 1900, some 50% of the total African population was Pagan, today the figure is down to around 10%.□ 260. Illustrated Weekly of India, 22/12/1990.□ 261. Mani Shankar Aiyar in Illustrated Weekly of India, 29/7/1990.□ 262. Actually, that was just what that Shiv Sena demanded twenty years ago, when it was purely a sons-of- the-soil party. Then, M.S. Aiyar's Congress Party made alliances with the SS, but now that the SS has become a Hindu party and repudiated this divisive regionalism, it is untouchable.□ 263. Reported in Indian Express, 21/12/1990.□ 264. The same is the case in Thailand, where 1990 saw some violent demonstrations and murders by Muslim fundamentalists. There too, Leftist "political analysts.... opine that fundamentalism may be only a cover to give vent to the major social and economical ills which the Muslims are facing", such as under-representation in government jobs. But : "Officials in Bangkok blame Muslims for their inability to get into civil service. Since most Muslims attend religious schools, they end up being very proficient in Arabic and Persian, but not in Thai... Consequently, they are unable to complete..."Reported in Pioneer, 12/11/1990.□ 265. Indian Express, 12/12/1990.□ 266. Times of India, 6/1/1991.□ 267. Title in India Today,31/3/1990. Emphasis added.□ 268. Times of India, 23/12/1990.□ 269. Hindustan Times, 19/11/1990.□ 270. Hindustan Times, 26/11/1990.□ 271. Mentioned in V.K.Malhotra's speech in the Lok Sabha, reported in Organizer,6/1/1991.□ 272. Sunday, 11/11/1990.□ 273. Sunday, 23/12/1990. Emphasis added.□ 274. Mohajir means refugee. But while the Hindu migrant are refused that accurate description by the secularists, here the term refugee is self-applied to the Muslims from Bihar and U.P. who

had terrorized the Hindus into conceding Partition and then went to the Promised Land of their own creation. The term illustrates how Islam nowadays plays the wretched martyr and refugee to claim undeserved pity.□ 275. The Week, 11/11/1990.□ 276. Sunday, 23/12/1990.□ 277. Times of India, 10/12/1990.□ 278. I am well aware that Marxists decry this formal democracy as a bourgeois concept. For them, it is the contents of a decision that make it democratic, regardless of authoritarian procedures.□ 279. A recent illustration of communal inequality in Muslim states, was the Saudi Arabian court ruling, that a company should pay substantially less compensation to the family of a labour accident victim, if the latter is a non-Muslim (with the difference between the Muslim amount and the non-Muslim amount going to the state). This court ruling has nothing to do with the undemocratic state structure of Saudi Arabia.□ 280. Illustrated Weekly of India, 22/12/1990.□ 281. See his biography of Nehru, Penguin 1989.□ 282. This is how G.H. Jansen gives the American Jews the blame for Iraq's invasion in Kuwait on 2/8/1990 :For the Iraqis the war began sometimes in March or even earlier when the West, under the impulsion of Israeli-Zionist controlled media, especially in the US, began to portray Iraq... as the future regional power that could be hostile to Western interests... (Times of India, 17/1/1991. Emphasis added) What he conceals, is that the Western press merely commented on Saddam's own boast that he would burn down half of Israel with chemical weapons (i.e. continue Hitler's work).□ 283. This sentence means : We didn't know this, and it was said in horror by the Germans who had faithfully supported Hitler without knowing what was going on in the extermination camps, when after the war the truth came out.□ 284. Quoted by Shachindra in Pioneer, 18/11/1990, from Nehru's letter to dr. Kailash Nath Katju in 1953.□ 285. The only countries where Jews were safe from persecution, were China and Hindustan. These countries' reputation was well-known in West Asia among Christian heretic sects and other persecuted communities. When the Muslims took over, the remaining Manichaeans fled to China, the Zoroastrians to India.□ 286. Muslim leaders like the Shahi Imam regularly threaten that the Muslim countries will come to their help, or will punish India by cutting oil supplies. In the twenties they said the Emir of Afghanistan would come and conquer India from the British. But these threats are usually dismissed as a bit puerile. The only help they are getting is vast amounts of money, so that the mosques of this poor wretched

community are far better equipped than most temples.□ 287. In his article At what cost Hindu vote bank ? in The Hindu, 20/12/1990, he calls on Hindu activists to "ponder over the consequences of their action. Do they want to turn the entire Islamic world into India's active enemies ?...If the country plunges into a civil war...will anything worthwhile survive the holocaust?"□ 288. Prem Shankar Jha in Mainstream, 1/12/1990.□ 289. M.J.Akbar has aptly criticized this patronizing attitude and this lack of confidence in democracy, in his India: the Siege Within. Pakistan has mostly been ruled autocratically, and it is a sick state that has already undergone one will-deserved partition. India, by contrast, has kept together, not in spite of but with the help of its strong democratic tradition. The comparison should be deepened into an inquiry on why most Muslim countries are not functioning democracies, while Hindu society has been rather successful at establishing and preserving democracy.□ 290. Sunday Mail 23/12/1990.□ 291. An illustration of the contempt of the secularists for the oppressed Tibetans, is that they mispresent the Dalai Lama's views. Time and again, they have written that the Lama now prefers limited autonomy to full independence. He has never said that. But he is prepared to accept limited autonomy for now, because his concern is the very survival of his people (something about which the flourishing and pampered Palestinians don't have to worry), in which light full independence becomes secondary. The secularists black out the continuing Tibetan demand for freedom, because they don't want to be reminded of Nehru's treacherousness and of Communist oppression.□ 292. e.g. Madhu Kishwar : "The chauvinist nationalism of the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha, which found support among large sections of the Congress as well, was a key reason for the success of Jinnah." (Telegraph, 25/12/1990).□ 293. An example of the law that the weak get the blame, is the way the Khalistanis are blaming the Hindus for all the real and imaginary problems of the Sikhs. All through their history, it was the Muslims who fought and persecuted the Sikhs. The Hindus did nothing to them except honour them. But because they are weak, they get the blame.□ 294. This changed when the Chandra Shekhar government asked both parties for historical evidence. The VHP invited some scholars to collect evidence and to formulate an argumentation integrating all the pieces of evidence. The result made a very good impression on the government and on outside observers, so perhaps the Ram Janmabhoomi affair will be a turning-point in the RSS-VHP valuation

of scholarship and work at the level of thought.□ 295. Hindus should study the failure of the Rajputs to push back the Islamic conquerors. They didn't study the ideological backbone or the strategy of these persistent aggressors, they didn't update their art of warfare, all they did was being heroic and die. This comparison has been made when hundreds of kar Sevaks were shot.□ 296. Illustrated Weekly of India, 22/12/1990.□ 297. According to Maulana Azad, Akbar would have finished Islam in India, but for Sirhindi. Akbar the board-minded ruler is a Muslim hero for Hindu consumption, Muslims themselves prefer Sirhindi.□ 298. About the very violent posture of the BSP-criminal nexus in Bihar, see Times of India, 14/1/1991 : Harijan militancy up in Bihar. The BSP purposely seeks to separate the communities, it does not allow upper caste people into the party membership nor into its meetings. Its nexus with criminal gangs is explained by some as just a form of social action and upliftment through whatever venues are available.□ 299. Aggression on Indian Culture, p.20 (Dalit Sahitya Akademy, Bangalore 1987).□ 300. Of course, it is only in the crassest propaganda literature that the Brahmins are dominant and therefore rich. According to a survey in Karnataka in the late seventies, Brahmins were the poorest community there. In a district in Andhra, 55% of the Brahmins lived below the poverty line, substantially more than the local as well as the national average.□ 301. Telegraph, 25/12/1990.□ 302. Sunday 2/12/1990. His earlier Sunday article Chaaranna Sarkar (March 1990) develops' the same theme, and in the months after Kar Seva, M.S. Aiyar has made his Sunday column into a continuing story of comparisons between the BJP and the rise of the National-Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). Apart from factual mistakes about German politics and untruths about the programmes of both parties, every episode contains a few truly stunning comparisons, like the equation of Advani's by-passing his liberal colleague Vajpayee, with Hitler's liquidating his friend Rehem, leader of the Nazi Party's storm troopers.□ 303. Letter by Israeli reader Yigal Samuel, published in Illustrated Weekly, 21/10/1990.□ 304. e.g. Mulayam Singh Yadav warned for the security of Hindus in Bangla Desh and in the Gulf countries, as reported in Sunday Observer, 4/11/1990. The warning is realistic, yet, conceding the building to the Muslims on this ground is definitely a case of appeasement, of buying peace.□ 305. Examples are the well-researched book by Bruce Graham : Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics (Cambridge University Press 1990), and

Craig Baxter : Jana Sangh (Oxford University Press 1969). They don't notice any fascist connection in the Hindutva ideology nor in its organizational structures.□ 306. Walter K Andersen and Shridhar D. Damle : The Brotherhood in Saffron, Vistaar Publ., Delhi 1987, p.82- 83.□ 307. For a school model of dishonesty and twisted reasoning & see the 1955 speech by Nehru against a proposal to ban cow-slaughter (republished in Muslim India, 11/1990). He brings in economics and agriculture, declares that allowing cow-slaughter is the way to preserve India's cattle wealth, and expresses his contempt for legislation :By merely passing this bill, you are not going to protect the cattle in this country. In fact, protecting cows is worse than killing them:"You may actually face a situation where the cattle is worse off than before." All this inventive reasoning merely to embellish his hatred of Hindu culture.□ 308. There is truth in Girilal Jain's proposal that Hindu policy is the most adequate translation of Hindu Rashtra. See his article Harbinger of a new order, included in appendix to this book.□ 309. One may complain about the poor intellectual thrust of the Hindutva movement. But one can also see it the other way round: in spite of the lack of an articulate ideology, this movement has brought to the surface an unprecedented mass support for the Ram Janmabhoomi cause. This indicates that its implied ideology is really the answer for India, though it is as yet only in seed form and needs development.□ 310. Published by Indian Book Gallery, Delhi 1982. See also his published lecture Case for Hindu State (Hindu World Publ., Delhi 1990). Madhok's speeches in parliament, of which collections have been published, were also quite valuable as ad hoc formulations of the Hindu viewpoint or interest vis-a-vis specific issue. He also wrote much of the Jan Sangh's manifestos, before he fell out with it.□ 311. It is remarkable that all the writers who have published contributions to Hindu thought in the Voice of India series, are not members of any RSS front. The same thing counts for the scholars (except two) who have compiled the VHP evidence for the Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir. Thought develops independently. But social and political movements may, or may not, provide intellectuals with a platform and a network to broadcast their ideas.□ 312. Sunday, 6/1/1991.□ 313. The Gandhian anti-modern bias with the spinning- wheel, is very un-Hindu. Hindustan had been in the forefront of science and industry for millennia, and there is no contradiction between Hindu spirituality and progress. Gandhi's retro tendencies were borrowed from Western writers like Tolstoy.□ 314. Sunday, 18/11/1990.□ 315. It is

telling that the pioneering work on this topic by K.D.Sethna has been thoroughly ignored by India's politically motivated historians. See his *The Problem of Aryan Origins* (s&s Publ.Calcutta), *Karpasa in Prehistoric India* (Biblia Impex, New Delhi 1981), and *Ancient India in a New Light* (Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi, 1990). □ 316. *Pioneer*, 9/11/1990 □ 317. *Times of India*, 7/12/1990. □ 318. An example of mistaken glorification of the Hindu past, without being crank, concerns Kautilya and his *Arthashastra*. His doctrine that an enemy of your neighbour is your ally, has substantially contributed to the absence of solidarity among Hindu rajas against the Islamic onslaught. Sri Aurobindo, who was a really conscious and proud Hindu (rather than an ignorant and exalted one) took the unsycophantic freedom to criticize him sharply. □ 319. Among all those Hindu men who complain about the discrimination regarding polygamy, there should be at least one prosperous and virile enough to get two women to marry him. When the state refuses him his bigamous marriage, he can go to Court to demand the right to marry both of them, invoking the Constitutional guarantees against legal discrimination. Instead of complaining. Hindus should go out and create some fresh debate. It might even be fun. □ 320. By waging a casteist struggle, the Janata Dal and the Bahujan Samaj Party are not going to create a casteless society anymore than the class struggle has ever created a classless society. □ 321. *Times of India*, 14/1/1991. □ 322. The British (first-past-the-post) system dates back to the time when an MP individually represented his town, while now he is first of all a Party representative; it is only suited for stable one or two-party configurations; and it is grossly unfair, giving disproportionate representation to regionally concentrated parties (in 1984, the Telugu Desam Party got a dozen times as many seats as the BJP, with a smaller percentage of votes). Proportional representation on the basis national (or at least state-wise) party-lists, as in the Netherlands and Israel, would be fairer. The German formula is a good compromise.